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ABSTRACT

A study examined whether patterns exist in the kinds and amounts of writing errors students make and whether teachers follow any sort of pattern in correcting these errors. Sixty compositions, gathered from a twelfth grade class taught by one teacher, were analyzed using the "McGraw-Hill Handbook of English." Student written errors were classified into five basic categories: (1) punctuation--commas, capital letters, and apostrophes; (2) subject-verb and pronoun agreement; (3) sentence structure errors--incomplete sentences and mistakes involving verbs, infinitives, conjunctions, and modifiers; (4) lexical and structural diction and spelling; and (5) miscellaneous, including syntax errors and letter format errors. Findings revealed that students made 3,870 English usage errors, of which one-third were corrected, and that no one manageable set of editorial usage rules could be used to improve significantly the writing of all of the students. In addition, the study established that the teacher followed no pattern for error correction. (Tables of data are included, and a checklist of errors is appended.) (JD)

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STUDENT WRITTEN ERRORS

AND

TEACHER MARKING

A SEARCH FOR PATTERNS

Presented to

The Educational Research Institute
of British Columbia

June 30, 1986

by

J.F. Belanger, Ph.D.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

> *Many years ago, in the time of Johannes Gutenberg, the Devil was alarmed by the sudden proliferation of Holy Bibles. So he assigned an army of gremlins to watch over printing plants. It was their mission to make sure that from then on a great many things would go wrong. That army was superbly trained and, believe me, it is still on the job.*
>
> Charles Scribner, Jr.[1]

Anyone who reads many student papers--be the authors primary pupils, secondary students, or graduate scholars in English education--knows that the devil's crew remains eternally vigilant. However, while knowing the historical roots of the problem may be of some consolaton to teachers of English, it is not of much help to them. What teachers need to know is what features of editorial usage can be taught at which grade levels using what kinds of strategies. The lack of such knowledge has prevented the profession from developing sequential programs based on readiness and reinforcement. The study reported below[2] examined in depth one very small part of this question: what kinds of errors are found in a sample of grade-twelve student writing which has been prepared for publication and how many and what kinds of errors are marked by the teacher. An

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[1]From *Publishers Weekly*, June 6, 1977, p.47. Cited in *English Studies*, vol.8 (Summer 1977), p.164.

[2]There are at least two good reasons for avoiding such studies as this. First, it is very easy to be hoist with one's own petard. As Scribner suggests, error is endemic to writing. Second, such studies are unbelievably time consuming. Not only does one spend hours in painstaking analysis of the papers and transferring the results to coding sheets, but one returns to the papers time after time to locate examples and examine subtle differences.

underlying objective was to isolate a small number of principles or generalizations which might be taught to decrease significantly the number of errors in the papers.

The study found that these students make a very high proportion of errors--about one error for every nine words--and that the errors are extremely diverse. Patterns did not emerge from the data to suggest that a hierarchy of principles could be developed to improve the papers significantly if taught to students successfully. Taken as a whole, the papers demonstrate both the almost endless opportunity for error in written English and the wide range of individual difficulties individual students have with standard edited English. The teacher marked only 10 percent of these errors--which is not to say that he should have marked more or could have marked all--including examples of almost every type of error. He did not concentrate exclusively on a restricted group of errors for all papers which would indicate global priorities for his teaching. He did, however, on occasion focus on specific errors in individual papers, suggesting attention to individual needs. On the other hand, he did mark higher percentages of some types of errors (e.g., spelling) than of others (e.g., run-on sentences or fragments).

A. *Public Attitudes Towards Error.* Seemingly endless press reports criticizing students' ability to write clear, correct English suggest that public attitudes have not changed much since Mersand's (1961a) report *Attitudes Toward English Teaching.* Mersand surveyed business executives, civil service administrators, editors, legislators, judges, college deans, and a variety of other leaders and found that all groups had adverse comments on the quality of student writing, with error the main focus. An editor claimed that "The deficiencies are of almost every variety possible" (p. 13). In discussing the first National Assessment of Educational Progress report, Boutwell (1972) suggested that "The second 'R' could stand for 'rong' as well as 'riting'" (p. 9).

Complaints of errors in students' writing is not, of course, only a recent problem. Judy (1975) points out that as early as 1892 a statement from Harvard University decried the 'decline' in writing skills. Mersand (1961b) quotes Chubb's 1902 statement that "In the complaints drawn up by the Colleges against the High Schools, it is the inability to write passably correct English that is the most severely complained of" (p. 231). He also cites Sterlling Leonard's 1917 statement that "In spite of years of training, our students fail to become easy, clear, and forceful writers" (p. 232). Sheils (1975) notes that "...the inability of the average high school graduate to write three or four clear, expository paragraphs has been the object of scornful criticism at least since the time of Mark Twain when only seven percent of the population managed to earn high school diplomas" (p.60).

B. *Rationale of the Study.* When employers complain about the poor quality of student writing, their comments usually focus on error (see Mersand, 1961a). In my experience, however, they focus on a very limited number of errors[3] and were very irritated by these kinds of errors. On the other hand, many common errors discussed in handbooks were ignored. Cameron (1965) found similar results in a survey of businessmen. The current study, then, set out to examine errors in a sample of student compositions to attempt to determine a limited number of principles of usage which if applied to the compositions would improve them significantly. In addition, in an attempt to discover the principles the teacher considered important, errors marked by the teacher would be tallied.

C. *Questions.* This study addressed two questions:

1. Are there a limited number of principles of English usage which if applied to a sample of student writing

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[3]In a small pilot study I gave six student compositions to four employers and asked them to respond "as an English teacher." Spelling, complete sentences, and unclear syntax were the focus of most comments. Errors which were not glaring were seldom noted.

would significantly improve that writing?

2. Did the teacher focus on a limited number of principles when marking the papers?

D. *Limitations.* The major limitations of this study involve the sample. First, it is limited to 60 compositions written by grade-twelve students. The results, however, suggest that a larger sample would simply have resulted in cataloging a larger number of errors although not a greater diversity of errors.

Second, the students in the sample were all taught by one teacher. However the teacher had a good deal of experience evaluating compositions on provincial marking teams which should have made him an above-average marker.

E. *Caveat.* The findings of this study are not intended to criticize the marking done by the teacher. If anything, they illustrate the immense difficulty of the task. The careful analysis of the compositions done in this study required an average of one hour and ten minutes for each 500 words. Of course, this merely involved coding the errors, not suggesting ways to correct them.

Nor is the study intended to suggest that more detailed marking by the teacher would be pedagogically sound. Indeed, marking every error on a student's paper could be expected to simply discourage the student.

Chapter II

RELEVANT LITERATURE

Both student errors in written composition and teacher-marking practices have been examined in many previous research studies. However, the work done by Mina Shaughnessy (1977) on the writing of extremely poor writers--whom she termed 'basic writers'--refocused the emphasis on error from a simple catalogue to an examination of its causes and effects. Work on teacher's responses has generally focused on teachers' attitudes (Purves, 1984), teachers' values (Harris, 1979), or students' attitudes (Gee, 1972; Stevens, 1973).

A. *Basic Writing.* Shaughnessy (1977) did a careful analysis of the writing produced by remedial first-year university students. These students' were not average high school graduates: their writing skills would normally have precluded admission to university. She found not only that these students had an extremely high density of errors, but that the fear of error prevented many students from writing more than one or two sentences during a class period. A number of similar studies have been done on other samples of basic writing with similiar results (see, for example, Kasden, 1980; Calderonello and Cullen, 1981). While these findings catalogue the difficulties of the very

poorest writers in the school system, they do not appear to be directly applicable to students in the average classroom in British Columbia. The focus of the studies on a careful analysis of errors, however, may well yield data valuable for teachers, especially if such findings can discover specific common difficulties students experience with written English.

B. *Student Errors.* Bateman and Zidonis (1966) analyzed the pretests and posttests of students in a transformational grammar study carefully and found that over 40 percent of the sentences written by the sample of grade-nine and grade-ten students contained one or more errors. They did not, however, attempt to classify the errors to group common problems faced by students. Freedman and Pringle (1980), Gorrel (1981), Weaver (1982), Kurth and Stromberg (1983), and Marzano (1982) examined the writing of students from grade seven through university and classified the errors. None of these studies, however, attempted to develop a hierarchy of errors or to isolate a manageable number of principles, the application of which would significantly improve student writing.

C. *Teacher Marking.* English teachers have a long history of ferreting out errors, but almost no evidence of the effectiveness of marking them. Connors (1985) notes that forces in the 19th Century led to "the current obsession with mechanical correctness." Researchers such as Harris (1977) and Raforth (1984) found that errors have a greater influence on raters' judgments than content does and that error plays a far greater role than teachers think it does. Purves (1984) found that error plays a significant part in seven of eight reader roles adopted by raters. Only the "Common Reader" role did not emphasize grammar and mechanics. Examining students' resposes to teachers' comments, researchers such as Gee (1972) and Stevens (1983) reported that students who received praise for their compositions developed significantly more positive attitudes towards composition than students who were criticized or students who received no comments.

However, studies have not attempted to examine errors marked by teachers in terms of what principles teachers were attempting to teach through their marking. Several studies (e.g., Harris, 1977; Williams, 1981) leave the impression that error marking is a largely capricious, hit-and-miss enterprise in which the teacher marks what strikes him or her at the moment.

Chapter III

PROCEDURES.

The 60 compositons used in the analysis were gathered in a semi-urban high school from classes taught by one teacher. They were analyzed and coded using checklists developed from the *McGraw-Hill Handbook of English*, the text prescribed by the province.

A. *Compositions in the Sample.* Papers in this study were collected "after the fact." Students wrote the papers as part of their normal course work and the teacher marked them without knowing that they were to be used in a study. The investigator contacted the teacher about obtaining a set of papers which he had marked recently. Of course, if either the students or the teacher knew in advance that their papers would be used in study, this might have affected the quality of their work.

Traditionally in his English 12 course the teacher has his students write two parallel themes, one early in the first semester (early October) and one late in the second semester (late May). These themes take the form of letters to the editor and are written on topics of the students' choice. The teacher makes comments on the content of

the first drafts, and then students revise the drafts, proofread them, and submit them for a grade. The compositions used in this study were written in this way.

B. *Teaching Strategies and Content.* The classroom teacher used the *McGraw-Hill Handbook of English* (fourth edition), the section on usage (pp. 64-127) in detail. During the first eighteen-week semester, classes met daily and each lesson generally constisted of two activities: the first half-hour was devoted to usage/language study and the second half-hour to literature. The usage phase of the lesson began with the students reading the appropriate section in the text followed by a discussion of two or three examples on the board. Students then did the exercises in the text, identifying and correcting sentences illustrating the specific problem studied. During the first semester, eight short quizzes on usage were given, one every two weeks, and one one-hour-long usage test was given at the end of the semester. In addition, students wrote the equivalent of a theme each week: eleven pieces the first semester ranging from paraphrases and analyses of advertisements to four critical essays on a Shakespearean play and fifteen pieces the second semester ranging from short story analyses to a library research paper. Students received credit for their rough drafts and proofread the drafts of their peers before the teacher graded the compositions. Writing assignments were marked using the scale used by the English Placement Test and marking symbols in the *Handbook.* In addition, once each semester the teacher held five- to seven-minute interviews with each student to discuss a given theme.

C. *Analysis of the Sample.* Since the primary interest in the study was examining the error ratios (instances of a given error compared with opportunities in the composition to make that error) for features of English usage which had been taught in class, the investigator constructed a two-page checklist using Chapter 3 of the *Handbook.* Major sections of the checklist included subject-verb-agreement, pronouns and antecedents, pronoun case, verbs, adjectives and adverbs, conjunctions, and punctuation (end stops,

internal punctuation, apostrophes, and dashes), and mechanics (italics, capitalization, abbreviations, numbers, and spelling). In addtion, the checklist contains a section for miscellaneous errors. The*McGraw Hill Handbook of English* and the *Gage Canadian Dictionary*, both prescribed for use in grade twelve in British Columbia schools, were used to determine whether a given usage could be classified as an error. A copy of the checklist is found in Appendix A.

The investigator analyzed the compositions and coded the results on a checklist. Two different graduate students (both certified teachers of English) were hired to help analyze the compostions, but they appeared to lack expertise and were not able to code more than half of the errors.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

As Table 1 shows, a preliminary tally revealled 3870 errors in the 31,702 word sample, a ratio of 12.2 errors per hundred words. The ratio for individual students ranged from 3.0 errors per hundred words to 23.1 errors, the latter almost one error for every four words. Eleven of the 60 students made fewer than eight errors per hundred words while eight made more than 17. A second perspective on the number of errors is the number of errors per T-unit[4]. The sample contained 2162 T-units, giving an error

Table 1. Preliminary tabulations.

Words: 31,702
T-units: 2162
Errors: 3870

Error Rates	Mean	s.d.	Highest	Lowest
Per 100 wds	12.2	4.3	23.1	3.0
Per T-unit	1.8	0.7	3.6	0.6

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[4]A T-unit is defined by Kellogg Hunt as an independent clause and all of the dependent clauses attached thereto or embedded therein. As such, it is roughly equivalent to a traditional simple or complex sentence. A compound sentence, however, can be divided into two or more T-units

ratio of 1.79 errors per T-unit. The lowest ratio was 0.6 errors per T-unit and the highest 3.6 errors per T-unit. Nine students made fewer than one error per T-unit while nine made more than 2.5 errors. These figures corroborate an overall impression gained from reading the sample: only a small number of these grade-twelve students wrote papers which were relatively error free. The majority made a large number of errors while about ten percent made an inordinately large number of errors. As will be noted below, many of the errors can be matched with correct use of the same structure in a given theme, often in the same sesntence or paragraph. Although these error rates are very high, they are not incompatible with the findings of other careful analyses of student written work, as was noted in Chapter II.

As Table 2 shows, punctuation and diction errors together accounted for 68 percent of the total errors in the sample. The misuse of the comma and faultly spelling were the two major sources of difficultly for these grade-twelve students, comprising over one-quarter of the total errors between the two. When preferred options are included with uses clearly in error, the number of misuses of the comma increases considerably.

The teacher marked 492 of the errors or an average of 12.7 percent, the highest percentage in diction and spelling errors (21.4 percent) and the lowest in punctuation (6.2 percent). The teacher marked most kinds of errors at one time or another. He marked 43 of the 51 kinds of errors listed in Table 2. However, even the two errors he marked most often--spelling and words omitted--were marked only one time in three. This is not to suggest that the teacher should mark every error. As will be noted below, in addition to time constraints, there are a number of good reasons for not marking every error in a student's composition. Futhermore, the teacher often appeared to be taking individual needs into consideration, marking one type of error for one student, but a different type for another, handling some with restraint but marking others stringently.

TABLE 2
SUMMARY OF ERRORS

Error	n	pct.	tchr.	pct.
1. Punctuation				
a. Comma	494	12.8	31	6.3
b. Capitals	200	5.2	10	5.0
c. Apostrophes	165	4.2	21	12.7
d. Periods	49	1.3	5	10.2
e. Question mark	42	1.1	3	7.1
f. Colon/Semicolon	23	0.6	3	13.0
g. Parentheses/Dash	26	0.7	1	4.0
h. Numbers	69	1.8	0	0.0
i. Hyphens	133	3.4	0	0.0
j. Signs	13	0.3	0	0.0
k. Quotation mark	62	1.6	5	8.1
l. Miscellaneous	8	0.2	1	12.5
Subtotal	(1284)	(33.2)	(80)	(6.2)
2. Agreement				
a. Subject-verb	76	2.0	7	9.2
b. Pronoun Number	114	2.9	10	8.8
c. Pronoun Case	15	0.4	0	0.0
d. Relative Pronoun	75	1.9	1	1.3
e. Pronoun Reference	105	2.7	20	19.0
f. Pronoun Shift	98	2.5	0	0.0
Subtotal	(483)	(12.5)	(38)	(7.9)
3. Sentence Errors				
a. Comma Fault	125	3.2	12	9.6
b. Run-on	62	1.6	11	17.7
c. Fragment	70	1.8	15	21.4
d. Tense	75	1.9	11	14.7
e. Split Infinitive	4	0.1	0	0.0
f. Co-ordination	94	2.4	9	9.6
g. Modifiers	36	0.9	1	1.6
Subtotal	(466)	(12.0)	(59)	(12.7)
4. Diction and Spelling				
a. Spelling	543	14.0	181	33.3
b. Diction: Lexical				
1. Substitution	98	2.5	24	24.5
2. Malapropisms	19	0.4	4	21.0
3. Gobbledygook	39	1.0	3	7.7
4. Opposites	7	0.2	2	28.6
5. Standard Usage	35	0.9	11	31.4
6. Colloquial	255	6.6	4	1.6
7. Idioms	4	0.1	2	50.0
8. Extra Words	15	0.4	4	26.7
9. Words Missing	94	1.7	38	40.4

c. Diction: Structural				
1. Substitutions	51	1.3	10	19.6
2. Infinitives	11	0.3	0	0.0
3. Adj. Comp.	20	0.5	1	5.0
4. Prepositions	108	2.8	2	1.9
5. Participles	14	0.4	2	14.3
6. Redundant	22	0.6	3	13.6
7. Reflexives	4	0.1	0	0.0
8. Like (conj.)	23	0.6	1	4.3
Subtotal	(1362)	(35.1)	(292)	(21.4)
5. Miscellaneous				
a. Syntax				
1. Awkward	57	1.5	8	14.0
2. Parallel Str.	33	0.9	3	9.1
3. Logic	9	0.2	2	22.2
4. Comparisons	12	0.3	1	8.3
5. Dangling Mod.	2	0.1	0	0.0
6. Garbles	19	0.5	4	21.1
b. Miscellaneous	67	1.7	5	7.5
c. Letter Format	76	2.0	0	0.0
Subtotal	(275)	(7.1)	(23)	(8.4)
Total	3870		492	12.7

1. PUNCTUATION

Students made 1284 errors in punctuation which accounted for 33 percent of the errors in the study. These included 494 errors with commas, 200 errors with capital letters, 165 errors with apostrophes, 49 errors with periods, 42 with question marks and quotation marks, 23 with colons and semicolons, 26 with parentheses and dashes, 69 with numbers, 133 with hyphens, 13 with signs, and 62 with quotation marks. In addition, eight errors were classified as miscellaneous.

The teacher marked 80 of these errors or 6.2 percent. He marked the highest percentage of errors in apostrophes (12.7), but he did not mark any errors in numbers, hyphens, or signs.

Table 3. Punctuation using commas.

Construction	Used		Not Used		Optional	
	Cor	Error	Cor	Error	Yes	No
Introductory						
a. Sub. Cl.	19	-	-	29	56	109
b. Adv. Ph.	20	3	-	26	112	174
c. Int. Adv.	17	-	-	69	9	11
Final						
a. Sub. Cl.	-	18	163	-	-	-
b. Adv.	-	10	67	-	-	-
c. Abs.	53	-	-	25	-	-
Appositive						
a. Res.	-	13	91	-	-	-
b. Nonres.	45	-	-	26	-	-
Conjunction						
a. And Series					32	125
1. Sub. Ph.	-	(5)	(123)	-	-	-
2. Pred. Ph.	-	(16)	(127)	-	-	-
3. Sub. Wd.	-	(3)	(77)	-	-	-
4. Pred. Wd.	-	(4)	(243)	-	-	-
b. And Comp.	4	-	-	6	-	-
c. But	50	-	3	67	-	-
d. Conj. Adv.	16	-	-	27	-	-
Interjection	16	-	-	27	-	-
Adverb	1	-	-	15	-	-
Quotations						
a. Spkr. Tag	2	-	-	11		
b. Placement	-	7	-	-	16	22
Separate S-V	-	17	-	-	-	-
Co-ord Adj	7	-	-	11	-	-
Misc	-	51	-	8	-	-
Total (less 'and')	-	(119)	(324)	-	-	-
Total	250	147	894	347	225	441

A. The Comma

As Table 3 shows, students in the sample made 494 errors with the comma[5] with the 347 errors of omission outnumbering the 147 errors of commission over two to one. Table 3 also shows that students used commas correctly more times (570) than they

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[5]For purposes of this calculation, words and phrases joined by "and" have been omitted. Since this very elementary construction accounted for 28 errors and 570 correct responses, to include it here would give a false picture of the error ratio

used them incorrectly (478), but that this error ratio is very high (1.2:1). The students also avoided using the comma in optional constructions in a ratio of two to one. The teacher marked 31 (6.5 percent) of these errors.

1. Subordinate Phrases and Clauses. A large percentage of the uses of the comma involve setting off subordinate elements from main clauses in sentences. These uses involve subtle rules and judgments. As a rule, subordinate adverbial clauses and adverbial phrases are set off by a comma if they precede the main clause, but not if they follow it. This rule is complicated by the modification that the comma may be omitted if the phrases or clauses are short and if the omission would not confuse the reader. It is further complicated by the fact that publication style manuals (e.g., the American Psychological Association *Publication Manual*) and technical writing books (e.g., Sherman and Johnson, 1975; Ulman and Gould, 1972) tend to be more conservative than the school handbooks. Technically, one is almost never incorrect to set off introductory adverbials with commas, but excessive use makes writing choppy. The well-tuned phrase is never choppy, but these students seldom wrote such well-tuned phrases. Table 3 shows that with introductory subordinate clauses, students used only two-fifths of the required commas (19 of 48) and one-third of the optional commas (56 of 165). With introductory adverbial phrases, the ratios of correct to incorrect were much the same (29 of 49) although students used a higher percentage of the optional constructions (112 of 286). They punctuated only 17 of 86 interrupting adverbials correctly. Interestingly many papers contained correct and incorrect uses or options used and not used in adjacent sentences. This suggests some familiarity with the rules but not a widespread or an automatic fluency with them.

When students learn the rules they sometimes overgeneralize and arrive at hypercorrections. For example, learning that subordinate clauses are set off by commas, they set off both introductory clauses (correctly) and final subordinate clauses (incorrectly).

Students in this study had not arrived at this stage. They made only 18 errors punctuating 181 final subordinate clauses and 10 errors punctuating 77 final adverbials. However, this is probably more of an indication that these students tend to avoid commas than that they understand the subtleties of the final subordinate clause or phrase. Final absolutes--described as free modifiers by Christensen--were also generally well handled with students punctuating 53 of 78 correctly. Perhaps this is due in a large part to the fact that final absolutes have a definite break from the rest of the sentence. In any case, even one-third of these were not punctuated correctly.

2. Appositive. Appositives can change the meaning of sentences depending on the way they are punctuated, unlike most punctuation which is essentially for the reader's convenience. In this study students made a smaller percentage of errors with restrictive appositives (commas required) than with nonrestrictive appositives. They made 13 errors in 104 of the former, but 26 errors in 71 of the latter. This may be another indication of the students' penchant for avoiding the comma and also evidence that they know how to use the constructions some of the time.

3. Conjunctions and Conjunctive Adverbs. When *and* joins two independent clauses or is used in items of a series, the comma preceding it is generally omitted in school handbooks. The comma is required if the independent clauses are long or if omission would allow misreading ("The uniforms were green, blue, and black and red"). Again stylebooks and technical writing manuals tend to be more conservative than handbooks, requiring commas in both cases while school handbooks call them optional. Ten of the 167 compound sentences found in the current study required commas. Of these ten, students used commas four times and did not use them six times. Of the 157 optional uses, students used the comma only 32 times. In many cases, a comma would have served to make the sentence easier to read, but the students did not avail themselves of the option.

Having learned to place a comma before *and*, students sometimes use commas incorrectly between words or phrases joined by *and* in what might be referred to as hypercorrection. In this study, students placed the comma in only 28 of the 598 possible structures, or erred less than five per cent of the time. Again, this is more likely an indication that students do not use the comma than that they understand the subtle rules which govern the different uses.

Unlike the *and* rule, the *but* rule depends on meaning rather than structure. Whereas *and* is preceded by a comma only if it joins two independent clauses, *but* is preceded by a comma unless it means "except" ("All came but John"). Of the 120 uses of *but* in these papers, 50 were correctly preceded by a comma, three meant "except," and 67 were in error. However, students used a comma with but a higher percentage of times than they used the comma with and.

Conjunctive adverbs which interrupt or end sentences are set off by commas. Students used commas around conjunctive adverbs which interrupted sentences only 16 of the 43 opportunities. In six cases, they used one comma, indicating that they felt something was needed, but were uncertain of the exact rule. Conjunctive adverbs ending sentences were preceded by a comma only once in 16 opportunities.

4. Quotations, Subjects and Verbs, and Co-ordinate Adjectives. Speaker tags are separated from quotations by commas. Only two of 13 direct quotations in this study were separated from the tags by commas, suggesting that students were generally unaware of this rule.

The placement of periods and commas with quotation marks is optional. Periods and commas may come before (.") or after (".) the quotation marks with the former generally considered "American." Of the 44 opportunities in the study, students placed punctuation inside quotations 16 times, outside quotations 22 times and directly below 5

times. Two papers had one inside and one outside. This suggests not only that students are not learning a consistant rule, but that individual students appear to have a random system.

Separating the subject and verb with a comma is an irritating error because it sets up a false expectation for the reader. There were 17 examples of this error in the study with one student accounting for four errors, four students accounting for two errors each, and five one error each. Stated another way, one-sixth of the papers had at least one example of this error.

Co-ordinate adjectives require separation with commas. The major problem is distinguishing adverbs (laughing young man) which do not require commas from adjectives (old, feeble horse) which do. As Table 3 shows, students omitted more commas in error (11) than they used correctly (7). They did not, however, add punctuation to any adverb-adjective phrases incorrectly. This follows the general pattern displayed by these students: errors of omission rather than commission.

5. Miscellaneous. The 59 miscellaneous misuses of the comma involved 51 errors of commission and eight of omission. There were 21 different types of errors with no error accounting for more than five instances. Thirteen of these errors involved the misuse of conventions: punctuating dates (5), separating names of a city and province (1), using both a question mark and a comma (3), not using any commas in a list of items (2), and beginning a line with a comma (2) (two students did this).

Nine errors involved conjunctions: in place of a co-ordinating conjunction that joined words or phrases (3), immediately following a co-ordinate conjunction (4), or immediately following a subordinating conjunction (2). Eight involved commas where other punctuation marks were required: colons (3), semicolons (1), parentheses (2), and dashes (2). Other miscellaneous errors included incorrectly setting off prepositional phrases and

relative clauses and failure to set off elements which were out of their natural order. Two papers contained sentences with excessive commas. Part of the problem, of course, was poor phrasing which gave the sentence a choppy effect.

B. Capital Letters

The 60 papers contained 537 capital letters used correctly within sentences and 200 errors in capitalization, 78 errors of omission and 122 words capitalized incorrectly. Twenty-five students made no errors of omission and 23 made no errors of commission, but only seven students wrote papers completely free of errors in capitalization. Four of the seven correct papers required no internal capitalization. Or, restated, 53 of the 60 papers contained at least one error in capitalization. Interestingly, no student failed to use a capital letter at the beginning of a sentence, but three failed to capitalize the first letter of a direct quotation introduced by a speaker tag, and one capitalized the first word of a parenthetical expression incorrectly. Seven of the 60 students (or 12 percent) accounted for 311 (or 58 percent) of the 537 correct internal capitals. This might be expected inasmuch as some topics--those discussing local or national problems, for example--require names of places. Geographical names (streets, cities, provinces, and countries) accounted for 287 or 53 per cent of the capitals used correctly in the papers. On the other hand, only nine of this category of capital letters were omitted by the students, one as an adjective (american football), three omitting the second capital in *United States*, four failed to capitalize *Canada*, and one failed to capitalize *Lougheed Highway*. Ironically, the student who failed to capitalize *American football*, did capitalize *Americanization*.

Names of organizations, teams, and bands (93), people (56), people's titles (25), wars, acts, and holidays (22), and months and days (16) accounted for an additional 212 correct uses or 40 per cent. Students also omitted 25 of these capitals in error: one

person's title (prime minister Trudeau), six organizations (the who), one team (B.C. Provincial wrestling team), three wars (Vietnam war), five acts (first amendment), seven holidays (christmas), and one event (awards' Banquet).

Among them, then, these relatively low-level and obvious capitalization skills accounted for 93 per cent of the correct uses. On the other hand, they also accounted for 34 (or 44 per cent) of the errors of omission. Even two capital letters which were the second word in the name of a business (Radio shack, Bite shop) were omitted. However, the more subtle capitals were used either poorly or inconsistently. Fifteen of the 16 races (negroes) had lower-case letters, as did all three uses of "century" as a proper noun. Trade names were capitalized correctly six times (all names of computers) and not capitalized two times (names of non-prescription drugs) while names of specific governments (the Canadian Government) were capitalized correctly four times and not capitalized eight times. Some inconsistencies appeared within the same paper. One student capitalized then failed to capitalize the Canadian Constitution in the same paragraph, another capitalized Argentine Army once but not the second or third times, and a third capitalized Marxism once but not the second time. By convention, general fields of study (mathematics) are not capitalized, but specific courses (Mathematics 12) are. One student used this convention both correctly and incorrectly on the same page. Additional errors of omission included the names of ships (3), of diseases (Hutchinson's disease) (1), and the title of a song (1).

Students incorrectly capitalized more words than they failed to capitalize with few of the errors involving subtle distinctions. Eight of these 63 capitals simply appeared mid-sentence for no apparent reason, and five different students capitalized one word each completely (BEUNA VISTA, CALIFORNIA), again without apparent reason. One student capitalized capital punishment incorrectly 15 times and another used 20 excess capitals (including such words as *track*, *wrestling*, and *cross country* incorrectly 12 times).

A third student used 17 excess capitals (including *Big Business*, 5; *Government*, 6) and a fourth 18, (including *Islands*, 8; *battle, shell, agree*, 7). These four students accounted for 62 of the 122 excess capitals; the other 60 errors were distributed fairly evenly among 33 students. Five of these capitals were used for emphasis (Bang), eight for general course names (History), 10 for a college, university, or school used as a common noun, six for the common word *street*, and nine for *military* or *government* as a common noun. Eighteen additional excess capitals involved common nouns: *an airline, school board, child abuse, council*, and *nuclear reactor*, to name a few. Only one error involved breaking a subtle rule. One student used *my Mom* and *my dad* in the same sentence and made two additional errors with *my Mom*.

Table 4. The Apostrophe

	Cor	Error	Teacher Marked	Omit	Teacher Marked	Total Errors	Teacher Marked Total
Possession							
Req 's	37	4	2	34	6	38	8
Req '	20	6	-	23	2	29	2
Subt	(57)	(10)	(2)	(57)	(8)	(67)	(10)
Poss Pro							
Its	14	21	1	-	-	21	1
It's	25	16	7	-	-	16	7
Subt	(39)	(37)	(8)	-	-	(37)	(8)
Contraction	223	15	-	10	-	(25)	-
Other	21	36	3	-	-	(36)	(3)
Tot (less Con)	(117)	(83)	(13)	(57)	(8)	(140)	(21)
Total	340	98	13	67	8	165	21

Key: Correct (used correctly by student); Error (used incorrectly by student); Teacher (incorrect use marked by teacher); Omit (omitted incorrectly by student); Teacher (teacher noted incorrect omission); Total Errors; Teacher Marked (total marked by teacher). Req 's or Req ' (construction requires apostrophe and s or apostrophe only); Total (less con) (total apostrophes used omitting contractions from the calculations).

The teacher marked 10 of the 200 errors in capitalization in nine different papers. Seven of these were errors of omission (four countries, one century, one war, one disease) and three of comission (two--of eight--capitals in mid-sentence; one--the third of five--Big Business).

C. The Apostrophe

As Table 4 shows, the students in the sample used the apostrophe correctly 340 times and incorrectly 165 times. The contraction, a very elementary construction, accounts for over 65 percent of these correct apostrophes, but only 15 percent of the incorrect uses. Students used this construction incorrectly about 10 percent of the time with incorrect placement of the apostrophe accounting for 15 errors (*had'nt, does'nt*) and careless omission another 10 (*didnt, hes*). The teacher marked 21 (12.7 percent) of these errors including examples of most types of errors.

When the contraction is removed from the calculations, the students used the apostrophe incorrectly more times (140) than they used it correctly (117 times), but the ratio of correct to incorrect uses is not nearly so great. To show simple possession, the students used the apostrophe correctly 57 times and incorrectly 67 times. The teacher marked 10 of these errors. Omission accounted for the bulk of these errors (57) and incorrect placement for the other 10. The students made a non-significantly higher percentage of errors in constructions requiring an apostrophe following an *s* (two boys' coats) than in constructions requiring an apostrophe and an *s* (a boy's coat), 59 percent in the former and 51 percent in the latter. The teacher also marked a larger number of "apostrophe *s*" constructions (8), than "apostrophe only" constructions (2). Perhaps one reason is that adding the *s* sound to a singular noun gives the writer (or reader) a speech clue that an apostrophe is needed while the lack of change in form for the plural noun does not. That is, in the singular possessive, "a boy" becomes "a boy's coat," but in the plural, possessive, the sound remains unchanged: "two boys' coats."

All of the uses of the possessive apostrophe in the papers--both correct and incorrect--could be accounted for by the two basic rules:

1) words ending in any letter but *s* require an apostrophe and *s*.

2) words ending in *s* generally take the apostrophe also but may add apostrophe and *s* if the second *s* is pronounced (Mr. Jones's boat).

Problems such as joint ownership (Hansel and Gretel's new friend) opposed to individual ownership (Hansel's and Gretel's clothes) did not occur.

The students used the possessive pronoun "its" and the contraction "it's" incorrectly almost as many times (37) as they used them correctly (39). Only one, however, used "its'." The 36 "other" errors in the papers included 28 plurals (kid's, law's, treaties'), three verbs (hurt's, get's), and five unconventional words (new'spaper, wan't, learn't).

It is difficult to discern form the sample how much of the error is due to lack of knowledge and how much to carelessness. Frequently, a student used a construction correctly in one part of the essay and incorrectly in another. On occasion, this extended to the same word. For example, paper 24 contained the sentences,

Canada has *its* own gas company

if this company would lower *it's* prices.

Paper PN, which contained the largest number of apostrophe errors (26), also contained four correct apostrophes. Paper POJ used "that's" correctly twice, but also contained "thats" and "whats." On the other hand, the sample contained 12 correct uses of apostrophes with dates (1950's) and seven correct uses of apostrophes to make figures plural (3's or 4's).

D. Other Punctuation

Errors in "other punctuation" generally involved either conventions which students would encounter infrequently or those which did not interfere with the meaning of the passage. Most of the errors in the use of periods, for example, involved abbreviations. Students made more errors than correct responses using question marks and italics to indicate quotations or book titles, suggesting this convention was poorly mastered. Nor did they appear to know the subtleties of using numerals, signs, or hyphens.

1. Periods. Of the 49 errors in the use of the period in the sample, 22 appeared to be sheer carelessness while the other 27 suggested that students did not understand the principle which required using the mark. An additional 13 were technically incorrect although commonly found in current newspapers and magazines (and therefore not counted as errors).

Abbreviations accounted for most of the difficulty students experienced with periods. Ten of these errors were caused by omitting the final period in an abbreviation containing two or more periods: P.T.A / U.S.A (2) / T.V (3). One student was responsible for four of these errors. Three students used an abbreviation correctly and incorrectly in the same paper. One student wrote "U.S's" apparently substituting the possessive apostrophe for the second period. Other careless misuses of the period included failure to place one at the end of the sentence (4) and using periods to set off phrases (10--nine by one student) where parentheses or dashes were required.

The six errors students made with standard abbreviations (Mr/ gr 8/ mts/ mph/ ss/ Van), the five with months (Oct (2)/ Dec/ Jan (2)) and the four Latin abbreviations (etc (2)/ ex/ eg), may have been caused either by carelessness or lack of knowledge. Ending a sentence with two pieces of punctuation (?./!.) and following an abbreviation with an extra period (G.V.R.D../ B.C../ and P.M.S.S..) suggests a

misunderstanding of the convention. Logically, two periods could be used--one to indicate the abbreviation and one to show the end of the sentence--but convention dictates otherwise.

Many acronyns (Radar) and titles of organizations (UNESCO) are written without periods. Of the 13 optional uses, students omitted the periods 12 times. One student used RCMP and NATO in the same paper as U.S.A., U.S.S.R., and U.N. Another used U.E.F.A. and F/FA and NASL in the same paper. Some words (DNA, IC's) are written without periods. In a hypercorrect form, one student wrote D.N.A. One student invented his own abbreviation W.C. (for war criminal) and punctuated it correctly. Only two students appeared to have any knowledge of the convention of explaining an abbreviation in parentheses the first time it is used. One followed the convention correctly, but the other used the explanation the fifth time he used the abbreviation in the paper rather than the first time and left four other abbreviations in the paper unexplained. The teacher marked five errors with the use of the period (10.2 percent), two of which were double punctuation.

2. Question Marks and Exclaimation Marks. Of the 120 opportunities to use question marks, students used them correctly 89 times and omitted them incorrectly 31 times, or a 26 percent error rate. In addition, students incorrectly used 10 question marks for constructions which were not questions. Thirteen of the 35 compositions which required question marks had both correct uses and misuses in the same paper. Twenty-six of the 31 incorrect omissions occurred in papers which had at least one question mark used correctly, suggesting that most students understand the use of the question mark, but may omit it carelessly. On the other hand, the three students who accounted for all ten excess question marks probably did not understand the convention.

Exclamation marks were used sparingly and generally appropriately with all errors being errors of commission rather than omission. No exclamation mark was required which was not used. Of the nine exclamation marks used, five were required, three were optional and one was inappropriate. The teacher marked three of the errors with question marks, but did not mark the error with the exclamation mark.

3. Colons and Semicolons. Students did not use optional colons or semicolons at all and omitted more of the required marks than they placed correctly. Of the 11 constructions which required full colons, students placed only three correctly, two to introduce direct quotations and one to introduce a list. Ironically, one of the students who used a colon correctly to introduce a question did not use the colon for virtually the same construction later in the paper. Six errors resulted from not using a colon to introduce a list and two others (both noted by the teacher) were required to introduce a clause of explanation following a main point. Three colons were placed incorrectly: one following a copula verb, one following a conjunctive adverb, and one which promised to introduce a list but did not.

Students used six semicolons correctly, omitted seven incorrectly, and used five incorrectly, giving an error ratio of two to one. One student correctly used a semicolon preceding a conjunctive adverb which joined two independent clauses and two students failed to use this semicolon (resulting in a comma fault). Ironically, the same student who used the conjunctive adverb correctly between two independent clauses misused the semicolon preceding a conjunctive adverb which interrupted a single clause. This suggests that only one student of the sixty had even a vague idea about this sophisticated construction, but even he did not understand the application of the rules.

Items of a series which contain commas within the clauses and some compound sentences require semicolons to separate the clauses. Students used three semicolons in

such compound sentences but omitted four others. Two such series required semicolons: one was punctuated correctly and one was not. Only one student used a semicolon in place of "and" to separate two independent clauses. This sophisticated option suggested a growing command of usage. The five misuses of the semicolon appeared to have no logical reason: one simply appeared mid-sentence, one separated two complete sentences each of which began with a capital letter, one cut off a prepositional phrase, one cut off a participle phrase, and one (noted above) was misused preceding a conjunctive adverb. The teacher marked two of the incorrect uses of the semicolon and one of the incorrect uses of the colon.

4. Parentheses, Dashes, and Elipses. Although students used parentheses and dashes correctly less often (17 times) than they used them incorrectly (25 times), a number of the errors were minor. Fourteen students used parentheses correctly and three used dashes correctly. Three students both used parentheses correctly and omitted them incorrectly in the same paper. At least eight rules and informed judgment would be required to correct the 25 errors. Four students used elipses, three correctly to show omissions from direct quotations and one incorrectly following *etc.* to indicate a thought trailing off.

Many of the problems students faced with the use of parentheses and dashes involved constructions requiring judgments. The conventions for using parenthesis, dashes, or commas are not always clear and precise. For example, parenthetical expressions which interrupt the thought of a sentence to a minor degree may be set off with commas, but more major interruptions are set off with parentheses and very major interruptions with dashes. Eight of the 25 errors were made by students who used commas where parenthesis or dashes were required. In three cases, the dash would have been preferred. In all, the stronger punctuation marks would have made the sentences easier to read. For example, in the following sentence, dashes would have made the appositive clear:

If the runaway only had confidence in someone, a friend, or social worker, but mainly their parents, they would be able to . . .

Seven parenthetical expressions were not set off by any punctuation which made the sentences awkward to read. One student used parentheses where commas were required:

BUENA VISTA (CALIFORNIA).

Four of the misuses of parentheses were grammatically correct but rhetorically incorrect. One student used parentheses three times to add afterthoughts which were better integrated in the sentence and one used parentheses to modify a pronoun when the pronoun could have been simply eliminated:

"It (Communism) has. . ."

Four students experienced typographical difficulties using parentheses and dashes. One typed a hyphen in place of a dash, one used both commas and parentheses to set off one expression, one left an extra space following the opening parenthesis and preceding the closing parenthesis, and one failed to use square brackets to distinguish between levels of parentheses when parentheses were used within parentheses. One student carelessly omitted the closing parenthesis. The teacher marked only one such error, the parentheses around **CALIFORNIA**.

5. Numbers. If the six basic principles outlined in their textbook (the *McGraw-Hill Handbook*, pp. 185-8) are used as a guide, students used figures correctly 176 times and incorrectly 69 times. An additional 38 uses were optional. Of the 244 prescribed uses, students used figures correctly 54 times but in error 60 times. In addition, they wrote numbers as words out correctly 104 times, but wrote numbers as words which should have been in figures only six times. In general, then, students erred on the side of using figures where they should not have (60) more than words which should have been in figures (nine).

Only 14 of the 54 correct uses of figures followed the rule of using figures for numbers which require three words or more to write. The bulk of the correct uses involved percent signs (12), dollar signs (17), and units of measure (8). Three were conventional: School District 44 (2) and Home Economics 8 (1). All eight of the errors which required figures rather than words involved signs and symbols: percent (5), money (2), measure (1).

On the other hand, 55 of the 60 errors which required numbers to be written as words violated the rule that numbers which can be written in one or two words be written in words. The other errors included three figures which began a sentence, one ordinal number (3rd), and one misused cliche (We are 100% with Britain). Interestingly, if Associated Press rules are followed rather than the textbook rules and only numbers from one to nine and those beginning a sentence are written as words, the number of errors is reduced from 60 to 20. The appropriateness of using the latter rule could be argued both from the point of view that these essays were intended as letters to the editor and that students may have induced this style from their reading of newspapers. Their textbook, however, does not use the AP style.

The largest category of numerals were those that students wrote correctly in words. Five of these followed the convention of using words for numerals which begin a sentence (compared with three errors as noted above). Twenty of the correct uses involved writing out the number *one* (as opposed to two errors), 31 correct uses with numbers between *two* and *nine*, and 40 with numbers *ten* and above. The other numbers correctly written in words included seven ordinal numerals and one fraction.

In both optional uses, students chose figures over words by a large margin: the construction *grade 12* was used 25 times and *grade twelve* used three; the construction *80's* was used eight times and *eighties* twice. They used large general numbers correctly

(thousands) in all seven instances and followed conventions such as using figures for school district numbers (2) and Roman numerals for kings' titles (2). Students followed the convention of using mixed constructions for large, round numbers (400 million) four times, but did not use the convention four times that it would have been appropriate. One student wrote 620000, leaving neither a space nor a comma and another wrote 320 000. The latter, substituting a space for a comma, is correct according to the Canadian Government guide to metric use, *System International* (1978). Ironically, the teacher inserted a comma, the only correction to a use of a numeral that he made in any of the 60 papers.

Eight of the papers each contained examples of at least three of the sub rules for the use of numbers (e.g., 137; thirty-five; 13%;). These papers also contained no errors in the use of figures which suggests that the students were aware of the rules for using figures. Twelve additional papers contained no errors but had examples of only one or two rules. Eleven papers contained one to two errors and five more than two, with the largest number in any one paper being eleven. Eleven of the papers contained inconsistent usages suggesting that the author was not being governed by a set of rules.

6. Hyphenation. Students used hyphens sparingly. They omitted three hyphens required for compound adjectives for each one they used, and used fewer than half of those required for other conventions correctly. Six students accounted for 44 of the 133 errors with the remaining 89 errors distributed among 39 papers. However, they did not use hyphens with "ly" compounds, a hypercorrect form which often accompanies the early stages of learning the compound-adjective rule. Nor did individuals use hyphens consistently correctly: one-quarter of the papers which required hyphens contained both correct and incorrect use of the hyphen. The teacher did not mark any of the errors in hyphenation.

Of the 113 compound adjectives requiring hyphens, students punctuated only 27 correctly. Most of the correct uses involved a definate oral caesura: *long-term use, part-time employment, well-researched article, low-class jobs.* While many of those constructions which were not properly hyphenated also had an obvious pause (*long range effect, far fetched story, thirty student classroom, air filled bladders, so called development),* many were less obvious (*well educated citizens, narrow minded people, high school students, senior high students, grade ten level, sudden death overtime*).

Only one student hyphenated a figure used as a compound adjective (*2-bedroom home*), while seven others did not (*25 year mortgage, 54 year bout, 200 pound person*). One student used a single-letter adjective (*X-husband* for *ex-husband*) which she hyphenated correctly. Seven of the compound adjectives were more than two words (*all too short lives, not too distant future, twenty student or less classroom, sixteen year old girl*). Not one was hypenated correctly. One used an adjective with a proper adjective (*former Yardbird* Jimmy Page) but did not hyphenate it.

In handwriting, the writer seldom needs to hyphenate a word at the end of a line. Of the ten hyphens at the ends of lines, only four were used correctly (*inflict-ed; bar-baric*). Four, all by one student, had hyphens both at the end of one line and the beginning of the next (*con- -victed*).

One began the hyphenation on one page and ended it the next and another compounded a hyphenation error with a spelling error (*response-bility*).

All three fractions were hyphenated incorrectly. Two students failed to hyphenate fractions used as adjectives (*one half* million) while one hyphenated a fraction used as a noun (*about one-fifth of that*). Two of the six numbers between twenty-one and ninety-nine were hyphenated incorrectly, one of the errors that of omission (*twenty three*) and one writing the number as a solid (twentyseven).

Students hyphenated three of the four *non* prefixes used: *non-absorbant, non-addictive, non-working teens,* all sanctioned by the *Gage Canadian Dictionary.*[6] On the other hand, almost all compounds with *self* as a prefix are hyphenated in their dictionary. The only student to use *self* as a prefix, wrote two words: *self determination.* One student hyphenated *extra-curricular* and another *anti-war,* both hyphenated by their dictionary. Another hyphenated *off-side* which the dictionary accepts either hyphenated or as a solid. Students also hyphenated two words without apparent reason: *out-rageous, let-go.*

Eleven of the 45 pages containing or requiring hyphens used hyphens inconsistently. Two used exactly the same words both hyphenated and not hyphenated: one wrote *part-time jobs* four times but *part time jobs* twice while another wrote *non-addictive drugs* both with a hyphen and as a solid in the same paragraph. The others used almost identical constructions with and without hyphens: *well-researched article; well educated citizens.*

7. Signs. Students used 45 signs in these compositions, 24 dollar signs, 25 percent signs, three plus signs, two ampersands and one cent sign. All but the plus sign and ampersand as a substitute for *and* are considered acceptable in some handbooks.[7] Students preferred the dollar and percent signs to writing these words out by a ratio of three to one. Assuming that such signs are stylistically acceptable, students made only five errors using dollar and percent signs. Three of these errors involved large mixed numbers ($1 million; $400 million), one a careless space between the dollar sign and the figure, and

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[6]Not all dictionaries agree with this, however. *The New World Dictionary,* (College Edition), for example, hyphenates compounds with *non* only where the second word is a proper noun (*non-Celtic*) or is itself hyphenated (non-co-operation).

[7] Books such as the *McGraw Hill Handbook,* the students' text, do not give specific advice on signs and symbols, but they use signs and symbols in examples when discussing the use of numerals, sanctioning symbols by implication. Both technical writing books (Sherman & Johnson, 1975) and publication manuals (Terabian and APA Publication Manual) advise not to use symbols and signs in text (but they may be used in tables and figures).

one a dollar sign carelessly omitted from the second of a series of three dollar figures.

Students did not fall victim to the two common errors using signs: they used signs with figures only. No student used a sign with a written-out numeral and no one used a sign without a numeral. Within the rules for numbers, various minor combinations are possible. Eight students wrote out both the numeral and *percent* (thirty percent) and one wrote out both the numeral and *dollars* (two dollars), but only one used a figure and *percent* (90 percent) and three used a figure and *dollars* (400 million dollars), all three for large sums. Interestingly, only one student mentioned the British pound in his essay and he wrote out the word rather than use the sign. As noted above (Section 5, Numbers), one student misused the sign in a cliche (100% with Britain).

Most of the students used signs consistently within their papers, but three showed minor inconsistencies. One used *sixteen percent*, *16 percent*, and *27%* on the same page and one wrote *$10.00* and *ten dollars* in the same paragraph. One student used the sign for dollars ($1.65) but wrote out *cents* (fifty-seven cents), a minor inconsistency that can be justified by the textbook rules for writing out numbers. The teacher did not note any of these errors.

8. Quotation Marks and Italics. Students misused or failed to use more quotation marks (59) than they used correctly (34). They failed to use italics in all three instances they were required. In addition, they used 25 cliches and colloquialisms, only one-half of which they placed in quotation marks.

As might be expected, students did much better with the conventions which are used frequently in prose than they did with those found less frequently. However, even the very obvious conventions--placing the exact words of another speaker in quotation marks, for example--were not always used correctly. Nine different students correctly

enclosed 13 direct quotations in quotation marks, but two students (including one who had used quotation marks correctly elsewhere in his essay) failed to use them correctly. A third student failed to open the second and third paragraphs of an extended quotation with quotation marks, making the passage confusing. The teacher noted the error and suggested that the student follow the convention of single spacing and increasing the margins of long quotations.

Students failed to treat 10 of 11 titles correctly. Three titles--a newspaper title, a book title, and a movie title--should haved been underlined, but were not. Only the movie title was even placed in quotation marks, technically incorrect but not an error most teachers would mark. Two students titled their essays and placed these titles in quotation marks, again technically incorrect. One student incorrectly placed the name of a presidential advisory panel in quotation marks and two students each failed to place two song titles in quotation marks. The only title which was correctly placed in quotation marks was the radio program, "Hockey Night in Canada."

Students used quotation marks correctly to define words or phrases five of eight times. The correct uses were in sentences where the need to set off the words or phrases was obvious: *drugs termed "addictive"; Article 231 also known as the "War Guilt Clause";* and *the phrase "North American."* On the other hand, quotation marks were also omitted where the need appeared obvious:

> Euthanasia comes from the Greek words for good and death. It is commonly called mercy killing (PA).

Nor were individual students always consistent either in the words they chose to place in quotation marks or the mechanics of using quotation marks. A student who otherwise seemed competent with quotation marks, both in enclosing direct quotations and defining words, carelessly wrote *'possession" and use of cannabis.* One student placed

Woman's "lib" in quotation marks twice but left quotation marks off three times while another student placed *war* in quotation marks only the seventh of nine times that he used it. One student placed a movie title but not two song titles in quotation marks. One student used three quotation marks ("Test Tube Baby "Age") and another used both quotation marks and underlining to emphasize *pay to play* where neither were needed. One student used two elipses within a long quotation but incorrectly used quotation marks before and after each elipsis.

General textbook advice on the use of cliches and slang is to avoid them. Corbin, Perrin, and Buxton (no date) suggest:

> It is rarely a good idea to enclose in quotation marks words or phrases that seem a little informal or slang for the context. If a word is appropriate, using it requires no apology; if it is not appropriate, it should not be used at all. (p. 130)

Some distinctions require mature judgment, a characteristic many of the students in this study lacked. Of the 25 blatant cliches and colloquialisms in the study, students used quotation marks 15 times and omitted them 10 times. They placed such words and phrases as *let go, this is it, in the "sticks," no room in the inn,* and *two to tango* in quotation marks, but did not use quotation marks for *down the drain, get our acts together, average working joe, split, bad news,* or *the difference is unreal* (the latter two corrected by the teacher). In almost all cases, rephrasing would have been preferable.

The largest single category of errors in the use of quotation marks involved setting off common words or phrases for no apparent reason. Three students accounted for half of these 32 errors (7, 5, and 4 errors respectively) but the other 16 were distributed among 11 students. Almost one paper in four contained these random excess quotation marks. Examples include *sex education, home economics, individual work, gas*

shortage, *civilized*, *"British" soldiers*, *political*, *landlord*, *mirrors*, and *we the public*.

Other acceptable or necessary uses of quotation marks were limited. Of the 13 correct uses, nine were by one student (*"good"* and *"bad" drivers*). Others included a nickname (C.N. "Ben" Parker), a definition (so called "super tankers") and an uncommon usage ("shootout" in professional soccer. The teacher marked two additional phrases which should have been in quotation marks: *one on one* and *in trouble*. The teacher marked four of the 75 errors.

The content of the papers did not lend itself to large numbers of direct quotations and therefore this elementary convention was not used so widely as it might have been if the content had been literary explication. Of the 38 direct quotations that were used, 36 were properly enclosed in quotation marks. One student carelessly omitted the closing quotation mark. Only one student used a quotation which contained more than one paragraph. He did not follow either possible method of indicating the continued quotation: 1) to indent both margins and single space, or 2) to begin each new paragraph with an opening quotation mark but end only the final paragraph with a closing quotation mark. Since the writer used a four-paragraph quotation, there was opportunity for a good deal of reader confusion before the final quotation mark was reached.

9. Miscellaneous Errors. Seven of the eight miscellaneous punctuation errors involved the misuse of conventions. Three students used slashes rather than commas to separate the day from the month in dates in the body of their papers. (Many others did this in the headings, as noted in Section 5, Miscellaneous, below). One student misused the apostrophe to abbreviate a year (79' instead of '79) and one made a lettered list of items beginning each on a new line, but did not use punctuation (commas or periods) to separate the items. The teacher marked one of these errors.

2. AGREEMENT

As was noted in Table 2, the 483 errors in agreement accounted for 12.5 percent of the errors in the sample. The teacher marked 38 or 7.9 percent of these errors. Three pronoun errors accounted for almost three-quarters of the agreement problems: agreement in number with antecedent (114), ambiguous reference (105), and pronoun shift (98). The teacher marked nine percent of the agreement errors, 18 percent of the reference errors, but none of the errors in pronoun shift or pronoun case. No paper was free of errors in concord. One paper had only one error (use of *they* without a clear referrent) and five had only two. However, 14 had 10 or more errors, the highest being 21.

A. Subject-Verb Agreement

Judging from the amount of space in texts devoted to compound subjects, these students made suprisingly few errors with this construction. Only two papers contained errors in subject-verb agreement with compound subjects:

> inflation and cost of living is a concern (POF).

Singular subjects caused students a good deal more difficulty with 20 of the papers containing 32 errors, five of which were marked by the teacher. About one-third of the errors (10), appeared to be simple slips of the "accidents is" and "roads reflects" variety. The teacher marked two of these. Since the subject and verb are adjacent and since the constructions do not present difficulties in oral English, these errors are probably due to carelessness. One-half of the errors, however, were in constructions where prepositional phrases (9) or adjectival clauses (6) separated the subject and verb:

> Advances in medical technology enables (16)

the only ones that I can see is the banks. (PE)

In addition, three students treated groups as plural (*the cross-country ski team have held a drive*) and two had problems with indefinite pronouns (*neither...have*). The teacher marked two of the ten simple slips and three of the nine errors with prepositional phrases.

Six of the 60 students made eleven errors using expletives. (*There is no guidance films; There is too many people*). All but one of these students used expletives both correctly and incorrectly in the same paper, and one used almost the identical construction correctly and incorrectly:

there is too many people

there are many reasons (16).

The teacher marked five of these eleven errors, as high a ratio as any found in the study. Students used the construction correctly 95 times. Both of these ratios are surprising inasmuch as the subject follows the verb--unusual in English--and construction is not used well orally.

The subjunctive mode--as might have been predicted since the oral English maintains only a few residual constructions using the subjunctive--was the worst used in the study. Only five students used the construction correctly while 17 made 31 errors among them. The teacher did not mark a single error. One paper contained both a correct and an incorrect use. Twenty-four of the errors involved the "if--verb *to be* construction while the other six involved substituting a modal (*if this would happen*) to suggest the contrary-to-fact situation. All five of the correct uses were of the "if there were" variety. That students made six errors for every correct use suggests the subjunctive is leaving writing as well as speech (see Scargill and Warkentine, 1972). Furthermore, it is doubtfull that making the corrections would have improved the papers

very much in the eyes of the teacher.

B. Pronoun Agreement.

Students made five times as many errors as in pronoun agreement as in subject-verb agreement. Of the 407 errors in pronoun agreement, over one-quarter (116) were errors in agreement with the referrent in number (101), or case (15). The teacher marked 10 of these. One-half of the errors involved either an unclear pronoun referrent (105) or an unnecessary shift in person (98). The teacher marked 19 of the former but none of the latter. The papers also contained 75 errors in the use of *that*, only one of which was marked by the teacher.

1. Agreement in Number. Seven of the students accounted for 43 of the 101 errors in pronoun agreement in number. The student with the highest number of errors (10) also used this construction correctly four times. On the other hand, the student who used the construction correctly most often (8 times) also made four errors. Students did not generally have problems when the referrent was plural (parents...their) or the second person (you) and such constuctions were not tallied as correct uses since they are not usually problematic. However, one student did use the construction "When litde kids are sick, parents give him or her medicine," another "two men...he," another "women...her...her," and another "criminals...him," apparent hypercorrect forms. Not counting the plural noun as referrent, students used pronoun number agreement correctly 49 times (spread among 20 students) or one-half as many times as they used it incorrectly. The teacher marked 10 of these errors, mostly of the "son or daughter...they" or "Austria...they" variety.

One-half of the errors in pronoun agreement in number (50) were the singular-noun-as-referrent variety (a person...they). While the pronoun and the referrent are generally separated by a few words of text, and while the construction is not always

used correctly in informal speech, it does not appear to be a particularly complex form to master. In four others, the pronoun preceded the noun to which it referred (*when they were a child*). The singular-pronoun-as-referrent construction which commands a good deal of attention in handbooks (perhaps because of its complexity rather than its frequency of use) accounted for only six of the errors in this sample: one...they (5) and everyone for themselves (1).

Pronouns referring to groups accounted for 34 of the errors. Students referred to countries as plural (*Austria...they*) incorrectly ten times but used the construction correctly only three times. One student used it correctly and incorrectly in the same sentence (*Russia...she*, but *Liechtenstein...they*). Five of the errors dealt with teams (*The Cosmos...they*), four with bands (*The Who...they*), and four with collective nouns (the group, 3; the class, 1). No student used a singular pronoun to refer to any of these. Of 12 references to "government," 11 used the pronoun "they" while one used "he." Only one student used a pronoun to refer to a compound subject joined by *or* : he used it incorrecly (*Ward or Dalglish..they*).

Twenty of the 60 papers contained both correct and incorrect examples of pronoun agreement, often in the same or adjacent sentences. Such mixed constructions as the following suggest that students regard pronoun agreement as mystical:

> Little kids love to go outside and jump around in the snow and have a good time but that night their mother is giving him or her medicine because they are sick. (23)
>
> If a child has any sense of morals of his own, they well stick to them (POC)
>
> the child...their parents; the child...him (in consecutive sentences) (POC).

2. Pronoun Case. The papers contained very few examples of the intricacies of pronoun case found in handbooks. Three of the four examples found, however, were incorrect:

abide by the same rules as them (22)

It was them (22)

like myself (10).

One student used a reflexive pronoun as an intensifier (*I myself have seen*, PD) which was marked wrong by the teacher. This construction might be considered rhetorically inappropriate but not grammatically incorrect.

Only one student used a compound pronoun as direct object (*if I hit him or her*, 21). This correct usage might be expected since the pronouns follow the verb and are in object territory. Handbooks devote considerable space to distinctions such as "Johnny and me" but students in this study did not use such constructions.

Scargill and Warkentine (1972) suggested that in Canadian English the distinction between *who* and *whom* is disappearing, but handbooks devote considerable attention to the construction. In the current study, students used *whom* correctly twice, once in an adjective clause (*someone whom they can trust*, 25) and once in a formal frozen construciton (*to whom this letter may concern*, 26). Only the first example suggests familiarity with the *who/whom* rules since the second is by this time almost a cliche. On the other hand, students made five errors with *whom*, two substuting *who* for *whom* (*who I can blame*, POE; *who they can talk to*, 20), and three substituting *that* for *whom* (*the teenage kids that I've seen*, 12; *babies that they don't really want*, 27).

Just over half of the papers (31) contained the pronoun *who* used correctly. Of the 89 correct uses, 31 were found in four papers, one paper accounting for 11. The correct uses of *who* almost all used *who* as the subject of an adjectival clause with *who*

immediately following the referrent. Five papers contained both correct and incorrect uses of *who*. Of the eight errors using *who*, two used *who* for *whom* (as noted above) and six used *who* to refer to groups (*companies...who*, PD; *Board...who are elected*, PI) or countries (*Austria...who*, PO; *Germany...who*, PO). One student used *which* in place of who (*children...which*, 16).

3. The Relative Pronoun *That*. The relative pronoun *that* is generally not used with discrimination in oral English. None of the students made the standard textbook distinction reported the Funk & Wagnall's Standard College Dictonary:

> When the relative clause qualifies or makes an addition to the main clause, *who*, *whom*, or *which* is preferred, whereas *that* introduces a restrictive clause. Thus we say: Washington, *who* was the first president, is often called the father of his country. But: The Washington *that* emigrated to the country was his ar.cestor. (Canadian Edition, 1974, p. 1387).

Substituting *that* for *who* (25 errors) and *that* for *which* (22) accounted for two-thirds of the 75 errors with *that*:

> their child that is screaming (8)
> students that go (22)
> bears that are caught (18)
> languages that are available (10).

The teacher marked only one misuse of *that*:

> It was Kershaw that recommended (19).

This was the only example of *that* used to refer to a person by name. Five students used *who* and *that* interchangeably, using both in similar constructions in the same

paragraph:

people that do/people who see (23)

parents that watch/parents who help (6).

Twenty-one errors involved substituting *why* (13), *where* (3), *because* (3), *how* (1), and *when* (1) for *that* in constructions such as:

the reason is because (PD)

there are several reasons why I feel (24)

two opposing views of Canada: 1) where there is a strong central government and 2) where there is a free association (POI).

Other errors included omission of *that* to introduce a direct quotation (5), a lack of a referrent for *that* (*they built that railroad*, (POI), and the omission of a non-optional *that* (*that feeling is man has complete control of a machine*, 10).

4. Pronoun Reference and Shifts. The papers contained 105 errors in pronoun reference and 9[illegible]errors in shifts in pronoun person. The teacher marked 20 of the former--among the highest percentage of any error in the study--but none of the latter. Almost two-thirds of the compositions (38 of 60) contained at least one error in pronoun reference. "They" without a referrent accounted for 45 of the errors, just under one-half of the 105 errors:

They should have guidance classes (20)

When they had Sunday shopping (PL).

The teacher marked nine of these errors. The pronoun *it* was used without a clear referrent 34 times and *this* used without a referrent 19 times:

it will bring trouble (19)

This is a financial subject that has come out into the

PMSS sport scene this year (17) [The student began his paper with this sentence]

This is the answer (24).

The remaining seven errors in pronoun reference were in such constructions as:

there was a report (21)

Here people could (2)

these men (2)

those animals (18).

More than half of the papers (34) contained shifts in pronoun reference with one paper accounting for 11 of the 98 errors and two others 7 each. Almost one-third of the shifts in pronoun person (32) used the second person *you* or *your* instead of *one* or *one's*:

Although most rules are just common sense, they can get on your nerves (4)

If you are over the age of sixteen you can be drafted into the army (26).

Most of these shifts in person involved a shift in point of view where no clear referent was involved. However, eight were shifts within sentences where referrents were clear:

when someone tells them to get help, they act as if they don't know what you are talking about (29).

Only one student used the objective *one*

Come Christmas and especially Easter holidays, one finds that a break is much needed (POE).

However, this student also used the shifted "you" three times in her paper.

A further 31 shifts involved the intrusion of the first person into objective description (I, 7; we, 9; our, 6; us, 7; me, 2):

I cannot list (11)

It seems to me (M).

Four students wrote their papers in the first person. In such cases, shifts to the first person were not counted. Commands accounted for 14 shifts (*Imagine yourself*, 3; *Be ready to consider*, 6) and questions, nine shifts (*How can we*, 2; *Would you be prepared*, PA). The colloquial *your* (*your choice athlete*, 15; *your average school*, 11) accounted for three errors and the gathering *our* (*our young people*, 25; *our society*, 21) an additonal nine.

3. ERRORS IN SENTENCE STRUCTURE

As was noted in Table 2, errors in sentence structure accounted for 466 of the errors in the sample or 12.0 percent. The teacher marked 59 of these errors or 12.7 percent. Almost half of these errors (257) involved incomplete sentences: comma faults (125), run-on sentences (62) and sentence fragments (70). Verbs accounted for 93 errors and misplaced modifiers for 38. Students also wrote four split infinitives and made 94 errors with co-ordination.

A. Incomplete Sentences.

Only 14 of the 60 papers did not contain any comma faults, run-on sentences, or fragments. An almost equal number (12) contained at least one example of each of these errors. One student accounted for 40 of the 256 sentence errors (23 comma faults, 16 run-ons, and a fragment) in a 1384-word composition (PN). In this paper, the student appeared to be working out a personal response to her parents' recent divorce. This paper was considerably longer than the average paper (528 words). Paper 18

accounted for 16 additional errors and paper 11 for 11 while the remaining 43 papers contained an average of four errors each.

As Table 2 shows, the teacher marked 12 comma faults, 11 run-ons, and 15 fragments, or 9.6 percent, 17.7 percent, and 21.4 percent, respectively. The teacher did not mark a given error consistantly throughout a paper. He marked each of two fragments on two different papers and each of two run-ons on one paper. However, he marked only some of the sentence errors on the other 20 papers (e.g., 2 of 3, 3 of 16, 1 of 4, 1 of 4, 2 of 4, 1 of 2, 3 of 20, 1 of 2, 1 of 3, 3 of 6, and 2 of 7). In addition, the teacher marked two complete sentences as comma faults.

1. Comma Faults. Thirty-four of the 60 papers contained at least one comma fault. As noted above, one inordinately long paper (1354 words or over twice the 528 words of the average paper) in which the student was attempting to work out a personal response to her parent's divorce accounted for 23 of the comma faults. Seventeen of the papers contained only one or two comma faults while 16 others ranged from three to eight. For a given student, one comma fault in a paragraph did not generally produce a second. However, one paper contained comma faults in each of the three sentences which comprised one paragraph:

> But then the Americanization of the rules in the NASL have been set out to impersonate the clumsy game of american football, the point system encourages scoring and brings defensive play to a minimum. The officials are showing a beautiful demonstration of unqualifying unqualification, they probably got their officiation diplomas from a package of Froot Loops or from an add on a pack of matches. The NASL will not tolerate a tie, there always has to be a winner either by sudden death overtime or the barbaric "shootout" which would leave a well earned draw turning into a winner or loser. (14)

These three consecutive comma faults comprise three of the four comma faults in the 500-word paper. In each pair of sentences, the first sentence presents a main idea and the second sentence elaborates on it. The teacher's only suggestion was to make sentences two and three into separate paragraphs.

Many students were inconsistant in punctuating similar stuctures within a paper. For example, paper 17 contained:

> The school has made a lot of money selling B.C. High School Sports Federation raffle tickets, why not use the money from the ticket sales for our school sports instead of for another smaller school bus?

However, two sentences later the student wrote:

> The school only has about one-fifth of that in return money from the tickets. Why not put that to good use in the school sport scene?

Table 5. The number of words in clauses joined by comma faults. Table shows number of sentences containing each pair of clause lengths.

Clause1	1 - 8	9 - 14	15 - 20	21 - 26	26+	Total
Clause2						
1 - 8	26					26
9 - 14	30	10				40
15 - 20	14	13	7			34
21 - 26	2	7	6	0		15
26+	2	2	4	0	2	10
Total	74	32	17	0	2	125

As Table 5 shows, a large percentage of the 125 comma faults were comprised of at least one short clause. Over 60 percent (74) contained at least one clause of eight or fewer words; twenty-six of these were comprised of two clauses of eight or fewer words, and an additional 30 had one clause of eight or fewer words and a second clause between nine and 14 words in length. Eleven of the short clauses were very

short containing fewer than four words. Only 19 of the comma faults were comprised of two clauses of 15 words or more with two of these containing 26 words or more in each clause. Eleven of the sentences containing comma faults contained two or more comma faults in the same series of clauses. Each of these contained at least one clause of eight or fewer words with just over one-half (6) containing very short clauses (four or fewer words). The number of words in each clause containing two or more comma faults is as follows: 8-12-7 (13), 5-9-6-2-3-2-16-7 (18) ,20-3-7 (21), 14-4-14 (POG), G), 10-12-6 and 10-3-22 (PON), 8-19-7 and 22-12-7 (PG). Almost all of these clauses are shorter than the average T-unit. In the sequence with the most comma faults, the student was apparently attempting to achieve the rhetorical effect of tension:

> Seeing gophers caught by the leg and having maggots in it, tougher animals like bears which last longer will chew their paws rot off first some bears that are caught by the paw have jelly right over there shoulder (18).

Since the average T-unit length found in the study was 14.7 words, 84 of the 125 comma faults had at least one clause shorter than the average T-unit length. On the other hand, two students made comma faults using extremely long clauses, one joining clauses of 29 and 39 words and another 27 and 30 words.

Some kinds of words tended to introduce the second clause of a comma fault more frequently than others, suggesting that students gave conjuction force to certain classes of words. In almost one-third (41) of the 125 comma faults, the second clause began with a pronoun. The pronouns used were *they* (11), *he* (9), *it* (6), *we* (4), *I* (3), *my* (2), and *she*, *their*, and *our* once each. Other pronouns included *some* (2) and *both* (1). Articles were used to introduce 15 clauses (*the*, 13; *a*, 2); nouns, 7 clauses (*school*, *mom*, *German*); and adjectives, 2 (*many*, *most*). Expletives accounted for another 11 openers (*there*, 6; *it*, 5) and demonstratives an additional 9 (*this*, 8; *these*, 1).

Prepositional phrases and other transitional devices also appeared to suggest conjunction force. Phrases such as *as a reward*, *after all this*, and *most of these* were used to introduce eight comma faults. In all of these examples, the second clause appears to be closely related in content to the first. Together, these openers cover three of the four examples discussed by the *McGraw-Hill Handbook of English*. Examples of these common faults include:

--You can tell he is scared, he should be helped (21)

--Everyone figures it will not happen to him, it will always be someone else (26)

--Thirty percent become single parents, thirty percent seek abortion or adoption (30)

--Many don't work at all, the prisons are full of these people (POB)

The gas prices should not be so high, there are several reasons (24)

When're they're children are bad they properly thinking, I'm so much nicer than my parents were to me, as a reward they're bad (6)

--We can no longer sit back, too many times in history people of the world have lost everything by not speaking out (19).

Conjunctive adverbs, the fourth category covered by McGraw-Hill, accounted for only seven of the comma faults in the papers, *then* (4) *for example* (2), *and unfortunately* (1). However, conjunctive adverbs were not used frequently by students in this sample, despite the fact that argumentative writing lends itself to these transition words. Conjunctive adverbs were used to begin sentences four times, to separate clauses one time, and to interrupt a clause one time. Students used these devices correctly less often than they used them incorrectly. Other sentence adverbs were also used to join sentences: *sure*, (1), *even* (1), and *no* (3).

Two constructions not dealt with in the *Handbook* which were responsible for 16 errors were questions (9 errors) and subordinating conjunctions (seven errors). Words used to introduce the questions included *when* (2), *what* (2), and *who*, *why*, *how*, *would*, and *will*, once each. Four of the comma faults occurred between a statement and a following question:

> --The anger between divorced parents usually comes as the divorce occurs, who get's the car? (PN)
>
> --Everyone was affected in one way or another, what was accomplished out of the whole thing? (PB)

Five came between two questions:

> --Can anyone openly pity the war criminals who lead comfortable lives, would your put him in jail or hang him? (PN)
>
> What about the other businesses off 224th, how will they be affected, will they gain? (P6)

The student who wrote the series of two comma faults above punctuated the next two sentences in the same paragraph correctly:

> --Will the shops on 224st expand their business hours to nine or ten? Will youths gathering at night create a problem? (P6)

Subordinating caused difficulty only when the subordinate clause could be joined either to the previous or subsequent co-ordinate clause:

> --The child will only be able to live with one parent at a time and after all the shuffling around he/she may end hating one or both parents, because of this limitation sometimes the child may never be able to see one of their parents at all falsifying that parent's image throughout the child's life. (PN)
>
> -- If the child behaves good then the parent feels worthwhile, if a child misbehaves or disobeys the parents role as a good parent is threatened.

(8)

--Canada has its own gas company, namely Petro-Can, if this company would lower the prices then all the rest would have to follow or lose business. (24)

Four of these comma faults were followed by *if*, two by *because of*, and one by *after*. Two additional comma faults were made using direct quotations. One student made a comma fault in a hypothetical conversation with a friend and another joined two direct quotations following a full colon with a comma.

--The Solicitor General of Canada, Robert Kaplan, stated that: "...the Canadian public, by and large, is unreponsive to the issue of War Criminals residing in Canada...", "...the govt. is always influenced by public responses on the issue..."

As was noted in Table 2, the teacher marked 12 of the 115 comma faults, just less than 10 percent. The length of the clauses seemed to be a significant determinant of whether or not he marked the comma fault. He marked five of the eight comma faults which had one clause of 11-25 words and the other over 25 words. He marked four of the 24 comma faults in which the length of both clauses was 11-25 words. However, he marked only one of the 24 comma faults in which each clause was ten words or less and two of the 40 comma faults in which one clause was ten words or less and the other was 11-25 words. On the other hand, he did not mark either of the comma faults in which each clause was over 25 words. Furthermore, he marked only one of the double comma faults (three consecutive clauses joined by commas) and one of the seven consecutive comma faults noted above in paper 18.

Nor did the word following the comma fault appear to influence the teacher's marking. He marked either one or two examples of each of the nine categories discussed above: personal pronouns (1/38); nouns and articles (2/24); expletives (1/11);

demonstratives (1/9); questions (2/9: both beginning with *when*); rhetorical connectives (2/8); conjunctive adverbs (2/7); and subordinating conjunctions (1/7).

In addition, the teacher marked two complete sentences as comma faults and one complete sentence as a fragment:

> --Furthermore, it is not the derogatory remarks linked to the names of the school and these people. It is... (2)
>
> --The rule now for the school athletes is to pay a fee of $10.00 to play on your own choice of sport, to play on a second school team, an athlete must pay a fee of $5.00 and on an athletes third team it is free. [The teacher placed a period after "sport" which does not solve the problem of the non-parallel structure of the second and third clauses in the list.] (15)
>
> --Because of the fact that constitutional convention, the same unwritten law that created the office of prime minister, required provincial consent as well as the will of the Canadian Parliament to change the provincial powers, the Canadian Parliament couldn't proceed unilaterally. [The teacher wrote N.S.--new sentence--after "powers" which would create a sentence fragment. The sentence derives its rhetorical awkwardness from the appositive following "convention." Otherwise, the structure is rather sophisticated].

2. Run-on Sentences. Almost one-half of the papers (29/60) contained one or more run-on sentences. One student produced 16 run on sentences (paper PN which also contained a large number of sentence fragments as noted above), one student five, two four, and one three. The teacher marked 11 of the 62 run on sentences found in the compositions or 17.7 percent, one of the higher ratios in the study.

The run-on sentences ranged in length from 16 to 91 words with the largest number (19) falling between 41 and 50 words in length. Fifteen of the run-ons were between 31 and 40 words long and 17 were between 21 and 30 words long. Only three were 20 words or fewer while eight were over 50 words (three in the 50's, two in the 60's one in the 80's and two in the 90's). Length, then, was not a significant determinant for potential run-on sentences.

A small number of the run-on sentences were comprised of short clauses joined by *ands*:

> The grandparents get tired fast and they are very slow and when they try to fight the snow it just makes them beat (23)
>
> This hurt may later be seen in the form of aggression and the child may become hard to handle and this would lead to a case of depression or cause future problems for the child may soon seem not to care at all and in not caring the child becomes one of the most affected by the long term divorce situation (PN).

Most, however, used a variety of conjunctions and not merely the simple *and* co-ordination:

> School athletes usually play two of three sports through the school year, so the ones who play two are getting their money taken away because one out of four athletes play a third sport so that the ones that play two are paying $15.00 while the ones that play three are also paying $15.00 (15).

The teacher did not concentrate on marking run-ons of any particular length. He marked two in each of the 20-, 30-, 40-, and 50-word ranges and one in each of the 10-, 60-, and 90-word ranges. He marked examples of both the simple and

co-ordination and the more complex run-ons.

3. Sentence Fragments. Twenty-eight of the compositions contained one or more sentence fragments. Eighteen of these also contained either a comma fault or a run-on, suggesting that students who have difficulty distinguishing sentences which are overloaded also have difficulty with sentences which are incomplete. Seven students accounted for 35 of these fragments, two wrote six each, three wrote five, and two wrote four. The teacher marked 15 of the 70 fragments or 21.4 percent, the highest percentage other than spelling and diction that he marked in the study.

As with run-on sentences discussed above, length did not appear to be a significant factor in the production of sentence fragments. Fragments ranged form three to 44 words in length with 58 of the 70 being 19 words or fewer. A small number (14) were five or fewer words, 24 were 6 to 12 words, and 20 were 13 to 19 words. Most of the very short fragments were apparently intended for rhetorical effect. For example, one student wrote an introductory paragraph describing how graduating students vandalize schools with paint, concluding the paragraph with "A serious problem?" (2) Unfortunately, the fragment was inappropriate, both rhetorically and grammatically.

A small number of these fragments were oral interjections and rhetorical comments which could not be attached to the surrounding sentences:

> Not too easy! (17)
>
> Or even once? (12)
>
> Probably not (2).

Some other short fragments were caused by the misuse of the semicolon:

> Most women can't cope with it alone; financially or mentally (16)
>
> 17 or 18 years old; an age where we have the right to go out on our own (22).

The semicolon was also misused preceding fragments which were not attachable:

> China, after the Second World War II was a mess; unemployment and starvation. (POH).

Such fragments are considered garbles.

One student used a semicolon to introduce a list:

> For example, there is; Spec Recycling (POD).

One student created a fragment by applying only half of the rule about punctuating the conjunctive adverb *however*. Handbooks demand a semicolon or a period before a conjunctive adverb which separates two independent clauses, but requires commas preceding and following a conjunctive adverb which interrupts an independent clause. Using the first half of the rule, the student wrote:

> Most of the time; however, they think that by running away it will give solutions to problems. (25)

Despite the space devoted to conjunctive adverbs in discussions of comma faults and fragments in handbooks--up to 25 percent of the discussion in some books--few of the students in the current study used conjunctive adverbs. Of the four who did, one created a fragment and one created a comma fault.

Of the 12 longer fragments, eight were between 20 and 29 words in length, three between 30 and 39 words, and one over 40 words. These fragments were generally multi-clausal. The longest one was an answer to a question, the classic answer which prompts some teachers to offer the advice "Never begin a sentence with *because*."

> Why, one may be bold enough to question? Because the NASL is a insult to the ancient art of soccer that has dominated and has long been the most popular in the world since some school boys kicked around an air filled bladder in a Southhampton alley in the early 1800's. (14)

This was the only example of this construction found in the study. Some long, complex fragments appeared to give students the illusion of completeness:

> In the Second World War II when all the Jews were put in concentration camps knowing that death awaited them (18).

This fragment could not be attached to a surrounding sentence.

One student wrote a 27-word list of names and sports specialties in a fragment which offered evidence for claims in a previous sentence:

> Track and Cross Country teams have produced some district heroes as well as that of the wrestling team. Sean Cody of the Track Team, Kelly Thompson and Kiernan Dixon of the Cross Country team, Bill Edgeworth, Jamie Steel and Gerry Badger of the Wrestling team (17).

While a colon between "team" and "Sean" would have improved the fragment, the sentence would be better if the fragment were made a full sentence with its own subject and verb.

Fragments were generally isolated structures seldom found more than once in a paragraph. One student, however, wrote three consecutive fragments:

> Instead, suspensions that result in time off from school for students that seem to deserve it. The extension of time spent in a place where no one wants to be, school. Last, that dreaded parent-teacher communication, the reports on behavior and attitude (11).

One student wrote a convoluted, ungrammatical sentence, recognized there was something wrong, and divided the sentence into a fragment and a main clause:

> When Henry IV of France wrote to the women in charge of the nursery where his son Dauphin was, who would later become Louis XII, was being raised he had a complaint that he didn't hear his son was whipped (6).

The teacher changed "Louis XII, was being raised he had a complaint..." to "Louis XII." He put "he had a complaint...," making the dependent clause a fragment.

Forty-two of the fragments could have been corrected by altering punctuation which suggests that the student had a grammatical sentence sense but made an error in editorial usage. Some of these errors were simple dependent clauses which could easily be attached to a surrounding sentence:

> Teachers and parents tend to overlook these problems as a "stage." When they should really take action before it's too late (21).

This student made the same type of error in a more complex sentence later in the paper:

> An adolescent commits suicide when they can't see any other way out. When their paraents don't care if they're dead or alive (21).

Another student wrote a fragment containing two balanced independent clauses:

> Heather and Scott had sex last night. Not because they really wanted to but because they felt pressured by their friends, society, and each other (30).

All of these would be good oral sentences and would result in longer than average T-units. Thirteen of the fragments were introduced by subordinating conjunctions: *when* (6), *because,* (4), *since* (2), and *if* (1). Four of these were produced by one student (21).

Eight other fragments were clauses which could be attached to surrounding sentences:

> as a reward they're bad. Which hurts them even more so they abuse their kids (6)
>
> my reasons. One of which is not because I want the

> freedom to use the drug without prosecution (PC)
>
> Also Capital Punishment is useless, because they should let the person suffer in prison for his actions. Rather than kill him for a killing they have done (13).

Six of the attachable fragments were quite sophisticated language structures. Although the main clause of the following sentence is immataure, the fragment, which is an absolute, is a very mature structure and would be perfectly acceptable orally:

> People that are against Capital Punishment are usually people who have experienced it in their family somehow. A family whose son or daughter has been put to death for something they didn't do (13).

Other attachable modifiers include:

> The memory of grade 12 and the joys of graduation (POH).
>
> If we were to draw the inside it would reveal a big drum beating many different tunes at one time. A symbol of the different material and subjects crammed in at the same time and converging into an unruly confusion (PON).

Non-finite forms of the verb *to be* were responsible for four of the five attachable fragments and other participles an additional five:

> The result being that its whole side has to be repainted in order for the building to be right. (2)
>
> The difference being the mothers are just left to rot (9)
>
> For a person to walk along a trapline it is both gruesome and terrifying to see animals holding on to life while being held by a trap for weeks, furiously trying to get free or even chewing their own paws off (18)
>
> How many times have you, or have you seen others, a nd the school,

exhibit extraordinary driving skills; screeching tires spinning around corners, sliding up on side walks, and skidding (PF)

For instance, needing a note after an absence (4).

Five fragments were adverbial and adjectival modifiers which could be attached by a change in punctuation:

The War cost the people of the United States one hundred and six and a half BILLION dollars. Still only a fraction of the eventual cost (PB).

The basketball teams seem to get the most funding. Especially the senior boys (17)

Another reason why the dump should not be put in Polder is the cost. Not only the $1 million that has already been spent but also money that could be saved (POD).

One attachable fragment appeared to result from simple carelessness in the first clause compounded by a garbled second clause with too many verbs.

Another point which I would like to make is. If a person is between the age of seventeen to eighteen is caught with alcohol in their possesion they are charged in adult court (26).

Of the twenty-eight non-attachable fragments, four contained an unattachable fragment following an inappropriate piece of punctuation:

China, after the second World War II was a mess; unemployment and starvation. (POH).

Six fragments were the apparent result of words missing or added:

The answer would probablly yes (PF)

In conclusion, consciencness is in today's society is becoming increasing widespread (PC).

A careful reading of the paper might be expected to catch such fragments. A more subtle type of fragment is the fragment lacking a subject which in some contexts could be a command but in the given context were simple continuations of expository discussion:

> Move on to college or university (15).
>
> So people, before they have children should have a roof over their head, a job, and not in debt. Be ready to take care of it. (6)

The sample contained three such fragmennts, two by one student.

Rhetorical comments and questions, most of them short, accounted for seven fragments:

> Probably not (2)
>
> Not to easy (17)
>
> Or even once (12).

One of the non-attachable fragments was the result of using an averbal in place of a finite verb:

> Maple Ridge painted four times this year, three to P.M.S.S. and one to Garibaldi (2).

Two fragments used a verbal in place of both a subject and a finite verb:

> Also lowering their quota so the seals can restore their populatlion (9)
>
> Also to make this are a greater recreational and tourist area than it already is (POD).

These three non-attachable fragments seem to be more serious than the attachable fragments because they suggest a lack of oral sentence sense.

Two of the non-attachable fragments involved the subordinating conjunction *because*

I do not need any more facts to back up my point because if anyone picked a new's paper on a Monday Morning and counts how many accidents and deaths are due to alcohol (26).

This because the PTA decided not to allow these films to be shown (20).

Two non-attachable fragments of over 20 words each were sentence subjects:

The inflections of black eyes and bruises and the millions of dollars put forth on unnecessary repairs 11).

One fragament was a balanced set phrase in English:

The more business, the more money (POL).

The teacher marked a larger ratio of the attachable fragments (10/42) than the non-attachable fragments (528) but he did not ignore any particular kind of fragment. He marked similar ratios of all three categories of fragments under 20 words: he marked four of the 15 fragments under 5 words in length, six of the 24 between six and 12 words, and five of the 20 between 13 and 19 words. However, he did not mark any of the 12 fragments which were over 19 words in length although some of these were quite obvious (the 27-word list of names in paper 17 noted above, for example).

He marked largely--although not exclusively--the very obvious fragments. The more subtle structures detailed in handbooks were by and large untouched. In fact, the teacher appeared to mark only those fragments which interfered with the sense of the passage. For example, he marked both sentences which had a careless omission of a word:

The answer would probably yes (PF),

and the sentence with two predicates:

In conclusion, conscientiousness is in today's society is

becoming increasingly widespread (PC).

He also marked the sentence containing a subject and copula verb but no complement:

Another point I would like to make is (26).

He marked both of the non-attachable garbles:

In turn could raise money for charities (18).

Although he marked three of the seven present participles masquerading as finite verbs, he did not mark any of the three sentences using *being* as the main verb. Nor did he mark any of the five semicolons which created fragments. He marked only one of the fragments introduced by subordinating conjunctions dispite the fact that such fragments receive a good deal of attention in handbooks. The fragments created by subordinataing conjunctions were easily attachable to surrounding sentences and did not interfere with the sense of the passages. The other five fragments marked by the teacher represented five different structural problems.

In addtion, the teacher marked one complete sentence a fragment:

Furthermore, it is not the derogatory remarks linked to the names of the school and these people (2).

The number of different kinds of fragments discussed above suggest that common lessons and exercises on sentence fragments might not be fruitful. Only on rare occasions (subordinating conjunctions or semicolons, for example) did more than two or three students share an erroneous grammatical construction. Individual students, however, often repeated the same kind of error two or more times in a paper. Nine students, half of those whose papers contained more than one error, repeated the same structural error at least once in their papers with one student using the same structures four times. This suggests a need for individual help rather than whole-class instruction.

The large number of sentence errors (comma faults, run-ons, and fragments) found in the study, however, suggests that a large number of these grade-twelve students lack a sentence sense. That 12 of the 60 students made at least one error in all three categories while only 14 were error free shows a serious lack of the fundamentals of written English.

B. Verbs, Infinitives, Conjunctions, and Modifiers

1. Verbs. Students in the sample made 75 errors with verb tenses. Modal auxiliaries were responsible for 32 errors and the prefect and progressive tenses for an additional 21. The majority of the other errors involved simple problems with tense sequences (10) or substandard usage (8). One student was responsible for eight of the errors and another student five. The teacher marked 11 or 14.7 percent of these errors.

The tense of the other verbs in a sentence containing a modal auxiliary appeared to present students with difficulty. They made 15 errors using this construction:

> you could do all the work you want (POL)
>
> They would be able to talk about the problem they encounter (25)
>
> While we are there we would have to (PL).

Students also used modals inappropriately 11 times:

> If this becomes the case, no one would (POM)
>
> If they find out from another source, their hearts would be shattered (27),

and failed to use required modals six times:

> It is non-absorbant and the paint is [can be] washed off (2)
>
> My ambition is to see blank band and I am sure there are many other fans who [would] love to see them (3).

The sequence of tenses to show the temporal relationship between two past actions also caused students problems. They made six errors with the past perfect tense, three using the past perfect inappropriately:

Aristotle had endorsed this practice in his Politics (PA),

and three failling to use the past perfect when required:

Our dollar would not have slumped so low if...companies paid their taxes (POA).

Interestingly, two students both omitted and used the past perfect tense inappropriately their papers, accounting for two-thirds of the errors with this construction. This suggests that they misunderstood the principle behind past perfect tenses. One student used the perfect tense to show a simple past action (*They have spoken to him last year*, PON) and two others failed to use it when required:

For every teenager who committed suicide successfully, it has been estimated that there are (21).

Of the seven errors involving the progressive tense, three resulted from inappropriately using the progressive:

but that night the mother is giving the child (23),

and four from omission:

If Sunday shopping is not allowed, the business has to close (PE).

Students committed only four errors with the simple past tense (*Russia is sided*, POO) and six with basic tense sequence:

There will be more seaguls which makes trouble (POL)

If anyone picked up...and counts (26),

each of the latter involving two long clauses.

The eight errors classified as substandard usage included:

he knew he has to (6)

they are beat (8)

many have die each year (18).

In additon, two errors were classfied as careless: *got* instead of *get* and "all this [has] added to the computer" (10).

2. Split Infintive. Although the split infinitive is given prominence in handbooks, students in this study made only four errors with the construction, none of which impaired the meaning. Examples include:

to effectively avoid (POD)

to clearly see (25)

the freedom to, (at this point), raise a family (16).

The teacher did not mark any.

3. Co-ordination and Subordination. One-half of the students in the sample made at least one error with co-ordination or subordination, a total 94 errors. Seventy-three of these errors involved faulty co-ordination, 17 excessive co-ordination, and 4 subordination. The teacher marked nine of the 94 errors, including five examples of excessive co-ordination in one paper. Three students were responsible for one-third of the errors while 21 students made only one or two errors each.

Most of the errors in co-ordination involved two clauses, one of which was logically subordinate to the other:

To my knowledge this was probably the most publicized nuclear accident known and it got many wheels in people's minds rolling (PK).

Both parent are forced to work and the children are turned over to babysitters (POF)

Some argue that Maple Ridge is not big enough and the bridge wouldn't be worth it (POK).

Other errors co-ordinated discrete or loosely related ideas:

I ask you do you want this bridge and I already see your answer is yes (POK)

Thus Marxism is a start to anarchy and I don't see why it couldn't work (POM).

A small number of errors with co-ordination were colloquialisms (*it is already organized and quite well*, POD) and two co-ordinating conjunction were used to begin a sentence:

The fees would likely go towards new equipment and other requirements of the Sports Department. And also the 10.00 gives the athlete a free ticket to the awards Banquet (15).

Two errors in co-ordination presented the opportunity for missreading:

decreasing deaths among youth and automobile accidents (PF)

All of the pregnant women and children were moved (PK).

Excessive co-ordination results in choppy sentences and immature style. To be classified as excessive co-ordination a sentence required a minimum of three *and*'s. One student was responsible for 12 of the 17 examples of excessive co-ordination:

The grandparents get tired fast and they are very slow and when they try to fight the snow it just makes them beat (23).

Five of these were marked by the teacher. Only four examples of faulty subordination (sometimes called upside-down subordination) were found:

When his business was doing well, they had Sunday shopping (PL).

4. Misplaced Modifiers. Twenty-two students used 36 misplaced modifiers, only one of which was marked by the teacher. One student made five errors and three made three each, but most made only one or two. Virtually all of these misplaced modifiers

would be used commonly in oral English and none interfered with meaning. Most students probably would not recognize them as errors. Handbooks, on the other hand, devote a page or two to instructions for avoiding them.

Almost two-thirds of the errors (23) involved only (*we can only hope that*, PJ; *will only be solved when*, PN; *it only recognizes*, 10; *school only has to pay*, 17; *only hurting ourselves*, 22). Other errors included:

almost swept all of the Mississippi Coast (23)

The first real computer was made in 1944, which was over 50 feet long and 8 feet high (10).

4. DICTION AND SPELLING

Problems with spelling, diction, colloquialisms, and omission of words were responsible for 1362 errors in the sample or 35 percent of all errors. Forty percent (543) of these were spelling errors while another 19 percent (255) were colloquialisms. Sixteen classifications of errors accounted for the remainder. As noted in Chapter III, the Gage *Senior Canadian Dictionary*, prescribed for B.C. secondary schools, was used to determine errors in diction. The teacher marked 40 percent of the omissions and 33 percent of the spelling errors, but only two percent of the errors with prepositions and less than two percent of the substandard uses.

A. Spelling. Spelling accounted for 543 of the errors in the 60 papers, an average of just over nine errors per paper, or one word in every 58 misspelled. The teacher marked 181 (or 33 percent) of the errors, the second highest percentage in the study. Almost 15 percent of the errors were repeated misspellings of the same word in a given paper while 126 misspellings (23 percent) were paired with the correct spelling of the word in the same paper. The number of errors ranged from a low of one error

(a 442-word paper) to a high of 56 (a 979-word paper), or 0.20 and 5.7 errors per hundred words respectivley. One student made only one error in a 297-word paper while six students made two errors and five made three errors, giving the 13 best spellers a combined error ratio of 0.4 errors per 100 words. The nine worst spellers in the study, on the other hand, made from 15 to 56 errors each, an average of 23.8 each, or an error ratio of 3.4 per hundred words. As might be expected, this 15 percent of the students accounted for almost 40 percent of the errors.

Applying the four common spelling rules would have corrected 53 of the errors: the i-e rule, 16; the final-y rule, 5; the doubling rule, 17; and the final-e rule, 15. No misspelling involved the c-to-k rule (picnic becomes picnicking). The difficulty generally attributed to spelling rules is that the student must memorize not only the rule, but a long list of exceptions. However, all but one of the 16 i-e misspellings in the study could have been corrected by applying the simple rule. *Foreign* was the exception. *Received* alone accounted for half of the misspellings while *their* accounted for another three. Of the five errors involving the final-y rule, *business* accounted for three and *paid* and *flies* one each.

In contrast to the application of the i-e rule, above, in which one word accounted for one-half of the errors, all 17 misspellings involving the doubling rule were made with different words. Five of these errors resulted from doubling the final consonant inappropriately (*ruinning, comming*) while the other twelve resulted form not doubling the final consonant (*stopped, occurred*). Six of the errors involving the final-e rule resulted from dropping the *e* before adding a suffix beginning with a consonant (*sincerely, involvement*). Only one error resulted from simply retaining the *e* before a suffix beginning with a vowel (*rosy* which may have been confusing because *y* is not always a vowel). The other nine errors all involved exceptions to the rule: *argument* (5 errors) and *truly*, the silent *e* following *u*; the *e* which is retained in *knowledgeable* to

protect the soft sound of *g* before a suffix beginning with *a, o, u*. The teacher marked 21 of the 53 errors (39.6 percent), including some from each category. He marked *their* in three papers but not in two others; he marked *argument* in two papers but not in two others. The marking appeared to depend on the student's needs and the teacher's attention.

Students made 81 errors with compound words: 39 by writing as one word words which should have been separate; 35 by writing as two words those which should have been written as one; five by hyphenating solids; and two by writing as solids words requiring hyphens. Four of the 39 errors involving two words written as solids would probably cause the reader confusion: *no one* (2), *a year*, and *a stronger*. The remaining 35, although showing varying degrees of unconventionality, would probably cause little confusion. Words such as *a lot* (7), *high school* (4), *run away, birth control, may be* (3), and *super groups* may just as logically be treated as solids as *cannot* (2), *wildlife, newspaper, nowadays, childbirth, overpopulation, classroom*, or *businessmen. In order, at least, of course* (2), and *any more* are counted as errors when written as solids, but *throughout, nevertheless, overheat, herein, anyone, whatever*, and *outdated* are errors when written as two words. Students' misspellings reflected this confusion. Five of the errors involved hyphenating words incorrectly (*any-thing, life-style*) and two omitting hyphens (*twentyseven, coop*). The teacher marked 20 of the 81 errors including both blatant (*a lot*--one of seven--*shockabsorbers*) and more subtle (*nevertheless, aforementioned*) examples.

Forty of the spelling errors were with homophones (to-too; practice-practise). Sixteen of these words were also used correctly in the same paper. Students made the most errors with homophones of *there* (12) and *to* (11). The majority of the other errors were with common words. (*add, hear, brake, course*), but three (*butt, carrels*, and *site*) were less common. *Effected* and *practice* were each spelled incorrectly twice as

might be expected from lists of difficult words. Sixteen of the 40 words were spelled correctly and incorrectly in the same paper (*there*, 13; *practice*, 2; effected, 1). The teacher marked 27 (or 68 percent) of these errors, 16 of these with either *there* or *to* homophones, indicating, perhaps, that these errors interfere with reading.

Of the 292 errors which were not classified in one of the above categories, 48 seemed to be the result of simple carelessness: *problably, simpel, wich, paragraghs.* An additional 42 errors were the result of one or more omitted letters which may have caused either by carelessness or by misunderstanding: *goverment, elementry, languges, knowlege, embarrasment, someone.* Thirty-three errors were caused by the addition of one or more letters: *awhare, buisy, loosing, shure, controll, neccessary, crimminals, carreer, worsten,* many of which appear to be added by faulty anology with other words.

Substitution of a similar-sounding vowel caused 46 errors: *ergent, dillers, origanal, benifits, mathimatics, cought, problums.* A closely related problem, mispronunciation, was responsible for 22 additional errors: *contraversy, old-fashion, illiminated, ramsacked, preform, minimun, intrest, ferdilizers, signifigant, alchol, mind bottling.* Apparent attempts to spell words as they sound resulted in another 29 errors: *bearaucratic, persay, proleteriate, garanteed, morgage, consciencious.* Many of these are irregular because they are borrowings from other languages.

Proper nouns accounted for 15 errors: seven names of people (*Tradeau, Fredrick*), four names of cities (*Vancover, Langely*), and four names of countries (*Britain, Liechenstein*), all but two of which are readily available in dictionaries. Transposed vowels in dipthongs (*reqiurement*) were responsible for four errors and incorrect abbreviations (*dosen't, musstn't*), an additional four. Students made seven errors with prefixes (*disapprove, inproved, X-husband*) and 17 with suffixes (*participent, constancy, rediculous, religous*).

In addition, four students were responsible for 14 very odd spellings: *advireticements, usetobe, disgned, physychological, physciatrists, possecision.* Omission of final *s*'s caused 8 errors and final *ed*'s caused three more.

B. Diction: Lexical.

Poor choice of diction accounted for 765 of the errors in the sample. Only four of the 60 students did not make any errors in diction (which is not to say, of course, that their diction could not be improved). The teacher marked 92 (or 11.9 percent). For purposes of discussion these errors were divided into nine categories; however, since the categories are not mutually exclusive, some arbitrary decisions were made in classifying the errors. The malapropism category, for example, is a subcategory of diction substitutions. The nine categories and number of errors in each are lexical substitutions. (98), malapropisms (19), gobbledygook (39), opposites and letter ommissions (7), substandard usage (35), colloquial (255), idioms (4), extra words (15), and words missing (94). As can be seen, two categories--colloquial and words missing--account for almost three quarters of the errors.

1. Lexical Substitutions. Lexical substitutions accounted for 98 of the diction errors. In this study, lexical substitutions were distinguished from grammatical substitutions in that the former were classified by meaning (e.g., *merged* for *emerged*) while the latter were classified by form (e.g., *your* for *your're*), part of speech (e.g., *easy* for *easily*), or convention (e.g., *fewer* for *less*). Most of the errors in this category appeared to result from misunderstandings of word definitions and most would be part of the students' speaking vocabularies. Some errors were the result of misspelling homophones: *sight/site* or *hear/here*, for example. Others are in common use in conversation. One in three errors appeared to be the result of the student's attempt to use a polysyllabic word: *alternatives to kill* for *ways* or *it is modestly thought*. On the other hand, seven

of the 60 students used such phrases as:

the rule that says (4)

the Vancouver *Sun* wrote (21)

often listed as faulty by handbooks. In addition, about ten percent of the errors would be classed as "poor English":

to run your conduct by (4)

carry good reasons (9)

raise a query to (14)

through the school year (15).

The teacher marked 24 (or 25 percent) of these errors.

2. Malapropisms. Nineteen of the diction substitutions were of the type which amuse teachers at marking sessions or provide examples for after-dinner speakers. Some of these result from misunderstandings of spoken language:

Talked to the tune of a hickory stick (11)

Aristotle had endorsed this practice in his Politics (PA)

[The road] has been unlevel, rough, and stricken with holes (POG)

The pot hole ridden 207th Street (POG).

Other examples include *short shift*, *single* (for *signal*), and *morality* (for *mortality*). Some malapropisms resulted from words which looked alike:

properly for probably (6)

prosecution for persecution (PON)

infiltrates for permeates (2).

The majority of the malapropisms, however, appeared to demonstrate basic lexical misunderstandings:

63 unforgetfull deaths (23)

rose in their grades (PJ)

submerge from their classes (11)

enforcing more serious crimes (7)

mass produce slaughter house (18)

show authority for parents (8)

conveyors of knowledge (11).

Two suggested a 17th-Century view of raising children:

discipline inficted on the child (11)

play revenge on the child (16).

The teacher marked four of the malapropisms, three of the word pairs which looked alike and *mass produce slaughter house.*

3. Gobbledygook. Closely related to the malapopism is the inflated language of gobbledygook with its attempt to sound elevated and important. Fourteen words or phrases and 25 sentences in this study were classified as gobbledygook. The fourteen words and phrases included: *exuberance to graduation, their consistency of good music, exuberent inflation, have no significant effect on the ceasction of painting,* and *considerable additional considerations.*

Seventeen students were responsible for the 25 inflated sentences. One student wrote four such sentences and one wrote three, but most others wrote only one. The teacher marked three. Possibly one difficulty with marking gobbledygook is that it is difficult and time-consuming to correct. Therefore, teachers probably ignore it in favor of marking more easily corrected errors. Examples of sentences containing gobbledygook include:

A clear answer with regards to its termination will be difficult to uncover

(2)

For a person to walk along a trapline is both gruesome and terrifying to animals. (18)

He screams for hours until his hand is numb (18)

This will result in decrease abuse put forth on teachers (11)

Marijuana should be decriminalized in a responsible manner or fashion (7)

A family consists of parent/s, children/a child, people (POF).

4. Opposites and Letter Omissions. Seven diction errors resulted from writing a word opposite in meaning from the sense of the sentence or from the omission of letters. Since these errors are very obvious, they should probably be classified as carelessness. One student wrote *can* in place of *cannot* and another *unimportant* in place of *important*. Five students also omitted letters (writing *a* for *at*) or substituted letters (*the* for *that*, *will* for *with*) only two of which might have reslulted from misunderstandings rather than carelessness:

more then a child (8)

if not for us, than for our children (POF).

These do not include the "ed" or "s" verb endings which were discussed under verbs and participle endings. The teacher marked two of the seven errors, both examples of words with meanings opposite to those intended.

5. Substandard Usage. Words or phrases labeled as substandard usage were words or inflections not found in the dicionary or words used unconventionally in phrases. These are probably the most serious diction errors in that they are generally not acceptable to most educated users of the language. While they do not usually confuse the reader, they generally halt him because of the obvious error. The papers contained 35 examples of substandard usage, consisting of 13 unconventional words and 22 standard

words used in unconventional ways. Twenty-four students made one such error each while one student made 6 errors and another 4. The teacher marked 11 (31 percent) of these errors.

Substandard words included: *supposedly, repeatingly, unpermanently, destructing, seeked out*, and *outrule*. Thirteen of the substandard phrases involved verbs or participles:

we use to never have to (POL)
they will trial you for it (26)
If they didn't wanted (PO)
tests giving to students (PO2)
required to enforcing the law (PF)
hadn't of been (11)
all is you do is (23)
is paying off the price
planning on destructing (POK).

Other substandard phrases include: *Being as if* (for *because*); *child is good, Ex child feeds dog; considerable more class*; and *alright to the public.*

6. Colloquial Language. The assignment given the students in the sample was to write a letter to the editor; consequently, semi-formal diction was expected, Standard Edited English as opposed to either the informal language of the coffee shop or the frozen language of the courts. Informal diction, cliches, and popular slang were all counted as colloquialisms. Although such categories are not always distinct, I counted 160 examples of informal diction, 77 cliches, and 18 popular expressions for a total of 255 colloquialisms. Four students used ten or more colloquialisms (one used 15), but only five avoided them completely. The teacher marked only four of these: *pretty well, somehow* (dangling at the end of a sentence), *the difference is unreal*, and *pain in the*

but (spelled incorrectly).

The informal diction is used very frequently by students in conversation and most of these twelfth graders appeared not to be able to eliminate it completely from their compositions. Typical examples included: *States* (for United States of America), *your kid*, *quite a few*, *odd ball*, *popping up*, and *turned them right round*. Closely related to informal diction is current slang, much of which is not found in today's dictionaries: *humongous*, *hassles*, *the crunch*, and *fruit loops*. Students used 75 cliches such as: *everyone for themselves*, *leaps and bounds*, *panic button*, *figures don't lie*, and *average looking Joe*.

7. Idioms. In addition, four students mofified cliches to make them non-idiomatic. Two of these were noted by the teacher:

To my knowledge (PK)

generation gap in the family (25).

8. Extra Words. In addition to redundancies, students added 15 extra words most of which appear to have been caused by carelessness rather than lack of knowledge. Ten students were responsible for the errors, one accounting for three, three for two, and the remainder for one. The teacher marked four.

Three of the errors, all made by the same student, might have been the result of a lack of knowledge:

had a brother of who cared for him (PA)

sentenced to a life imprisonment (PA)

There was in the 20th Century once a government (PA)

Five of the extra words were verbs, all apparently careless errors:

Conscientious alteration is in today's society is becoming increasingly widespread (PC).

Other examples included articles, nouns, prepositions, and relative pronouns:

He knows that form his own experience that he has (6)

to make decisons their decisions for them (20)

was used at during the Vietnam War (2)

9. Words Missing. The difficulty with omitting words is that the omission may halt the reader, especially if a key word is omitted. Students in the sample omitted 94 words which marred either the grammaticality or the sense of the sentences. The importance of these words to the meaning of the paper is illustrated by the fact that the teacher marked over 40 percent of them (38), the largest proportion marked of any category in the study. Most errors appeared to be the result of carelessness and poor proofreading. Almost two-thirds (39) of the students omitted at least one word. Articles were the most frequent parts of speech omitted. Twenty-four articles were omitted, 19 *the*'s, four *a*'s, and one *an*. One student accounted for four of these in such constructions as:

in all of cases (17).

The teacher marked four of these. Verbs (20), prepositions (17), and nouns (13) accounted for the majority of the other omissions. Ten different verbs were omitted with parts of the verb *to be* accounting for 10 omissions. [*is* (3), *are* (2), *be* (2), *being* (2), and *was* (1)] in such constructions as:

the answer would probably yes (PRF)

This because the P.T.A (20)

accused of abusive (29).

The teacher marked ten of these. Sixteen different prepositions were omitted, with *in* (6) and *to* (4) accounting for the majority of the omissions. That the ommissions were caused by carelessness is suggested by such constructions as:

us a result of the way they were brought (13)

their code medical ethics (PBR)

sure it happens older people too (26).

The teacher marked just over half (9) of these. Again, the 13 nouns which were omitted seemed to be the result of carelessness as the following examples illustrate:

People dying in the concentration is much like (18)

is what any would like to see (5).

Relative pronouns (8), conjunctions (7), pronouns (3), and phrases (2) accounted for the remainder of the omissions:.

exactly an athlete should do (15)

the good Communism has done (POG)

attend College University (15)

and so commit suicide (21).

The teacher marked 9 of these.

C. Diction: Structural

Over 60 percent of the structural problems with diction were accounted for by grammatical substitutions (51 errors) and prepositions (108 errors). The other categories of errors included infinitive markers (11), adjectival complements (20), participle endings (14), redundancies (22), reflexives (4), and like as a conjunction (23). The teacher marked 19 (7.5 percent) of these errors, over one-half of these being grammatical substitutions.

1. Grammatically Incorrect Substitutions and Standard Usage. The 51 grammatically incorrect diction choices and errors in standard usage involved both errors in word forms and usage conventions. The teacher marked 10. Failure to distinguish between *less* and *fewer* or *amount* and *number* accounted for six errors. Most of the latter involved substituting the more common *less* for *fewer*, but one resulted from using *fewer* inappropriately (in what might be termed a hypercorrect usage):

> the white population is fewer than 6% (28).

Other conventions included the *continuously-continually* and *except-accept* distinctions and the use of *an hour* for *per hour* (5 errors in 3 different papers).

Eleven of the errors involved the incorrect form of a pronoun. Six of these errors were simple orthographic problems *whos* for *whose*, *there* for *their*), but five showed more serious misunderstandings (or carelessness):

> people could express them (themselves) (3)
>
> *you* for *your* (2 errors) (POB)
>
> *they* for *one* (22)
>
> I am a resident and wish (for *who wishes*) (POD).

Ten of the errors involved adverbs. Using adjectives in place of adverbs accounted for only five errors (*easy* for *easily*, *wrong* for *wrongly*, *good* for *well poor* for *poorly*) which is suprising since these errors are so common in oral English.. Other distinctions which caused students problems were *when* for *while*, *where* for *in which*, *where* for *that*, and *where* for *while*. However, three students used *never* in place of a verb in sentences such as the following:

> They never had a course until this year (20).

Three errors involved conjunctions, one and apparently careless error (two of [for *or*] three sports) and two substituting *only* or *although* for *but*. Two errors resulted from

substuting participles for infinitives (*on giving* and *for gaining*) and the remainder of the grammatical errors were random: *percent* for *percentage*, *life* for *lives*, and *are* for *have*.

2. Infinitive Markers: Using "and" in place of "to" as an infinitive marker is relatively common in oral conversation: he had hoped to go out and buy a car. However, handbooks suggest that such constructions be avoided in writing. Ten different students made 11 such errors. Examples include: *try and prove*, *stay and watch*, *stop and think*, *go out and buy*, *stop and comfort*, *try and see*, and *get together and discuss*. Almost all of these are in common use in oral language and appear to be more shibboleths than barriers to meaning. This may account for the fact that the teacher did not note any.

3. Adjectival Complements. Handbooks require predicate adjectives as complements to copula verbs, noting that the correct form is "this is the reason that," not "this is because." Students made 12 errors with this construction, five using *because*; four, *where*; two, *why*; and one, *when*:

> The thing that bothers me is why (26)
> that is because (PD)
> this where (POI).

Closely related to this is the construction "these are the reasons why." Students used this construction eight times, seven with *why* and one with *when*. The teacher marked one of these errors.

4. Prepositions. Forty-five students, three-quarters of those in the sample, made 108 errors with prepostions. Five students, most of whom apparently spoke English as a second language, were responsible for almost one-third of these errors, with one student committing nine. Most of the errors involved substituting a closely related preposition for

the correct one and most did not interfere with the meaning of the sentence. Therefore, many of the errors would probably be unnoticed in casual conversation. The teacher marked two.

The majority of the errors involved simple substitution:

objection of computer (10)

life on the world (12)

What I feel on capital punishment (13)

caught on a trap (18)

disapproval over (POD).

Some prepositions, however, seemed to miss the mark more than others did:

a good job on controlling oil prices (24)

disagreed to (19)

charged for murder (13)

put him to the chair (13).

A small number appeared to be idioms of another language translated into English:

mother to the baby (27)

guilty for what they have done (27)

solution to the parents (27)

taxes over resources (19).

In addition, four students omitted prepositions, apparently carelessly (*one day left which they have free time*, PL; *not caring their children*, PN) and two used slang (*too large of a notion*, PI; *has come out into the sports scene*, 17). One student made an orthographic error by combining a separable verb suffix with a prepositon (*give into pressures*, PM). Only in very careful speech would this distinction be made orally. Only

two students ended a sentence with a preposition (*split the country up*, 19; a *course they don't believe in or feel uncomfortable with*, POC).

Two of the errors in prepositions were potentially confusing:

> give them [children] up for a nice home (27)
>
> in a result of 201 deaths (meaning *resulting in 210* deaths) (23).

5. Participle Endings. Eight students made 14 errors omitting the final *ed* from participles. One student was responsible for six of these errors. Ironically this student wrote "level is achieve" in one sentence and "level is achieved" in the following sentence. However, he made five other such errors, suggesting that he misunderstood the principle rather than that the was simply careless. The teacher marked two errors in participle endings.

Ten of these errors are common in oral usage: *is suppose to* (2), *use to be* (4), *teenage driver*, *one room school*, *old fashion*, and *medium size companies*. Others, however, are less common (*cone shape*, *handicap people*), and some are uncommon (*age is reach*, *sometimes call chips*).

6. Redundant. Twenty students in the sample wrote 22 redundant phrases. A small number of these errors seemed to be the result of carelessness and some might be used orally, but the majority appeared to result from the student's not knowing the conventions. The teacher marked three of these, two of which involved the phrase "In my own opinion I think." (23)

Most of the redundancies probably would not be recognized as such by the students:

> converted back (PD)

support themselves in making a living (25).

Many might be used orally:

in today's modern world (PC)

in many various parts (25).

A small number shaded towards gobbledygook:

sufficient knowledge enough (PC)

enable them to be able (PM).

Some appeared to result from carelessness:

whether or not we want to attend school or not (23)

second world war II (18).

7. Reflexive Pronouns. Four students in the study each made one error using reflexive pronouns. Three used exactly the same construction (*like myself*) and one used a similar construction (*decisions made by myself*). The teacher did not mark any of these.

8. *Like* Misused. Sixteen students made 23 errors using *like* as a conjunction. One student made four errors, one made three, and two made two. The teacher marked only one of these errors. Since the construction is very common in oral English, it is unlikely that students would recognize it as an error. Only two of the 23 errors used a complete clause with a finite verb following *like*:

they don't feel like they are (22)

like I said (17).

All of the other errors elided the verb:

like Alberta (26)

treat like juniors (22)

like people who do the killing (13),

which gives the illusion of a prepostional phrase rather than a full clause.

5. MISCELLANEOUS

The errors classified as miscellaneous included 132 syntax errors; 67 errors with noun plurals, conjunctions, the passive voice, and others; and 76 errors with letter format. The teacher marked 17 of the syntax errors and five of the errors with noun plurals, but none of the errors in letter format.

A. Syntax Errors

A problem which plagues evaluator of writing is the "awkward" sentence which is not easily describable in grammatical errors terminology. Many teachers overcome this problem by rewriting the sentence, but time constraints prohibit this for all but a very few sentences. Consequently, most of these errors are noted by the vague "awk," "syntax," "logic," or "sentence structure" or at times by the derogatory terms "garble" or "gobbledygook." There were 132 such errors in the current sample and although the distinctions between them are not always clear, these semantic/syntactic errors were classified in the following categories: awkward (57), parallel structure (33), logic (9), comparisons (12), dangling modifiers (2), and garbles (19). The teacher marked 18 of these errors (13.6 percent). Gobbledygook appeared to straddle the syntax/diction categories and was arbitrarily classified as diction.

1. Awkward. Fifty-seven sentences classified as awkward were written by 27 students. One student wrote eight awkward sentences and another wrote four, but most wrote only one or two. The teacher marked eight (14 percent). Of course, many other sentences had some degree of awkwardness. The criteria used to decide whether or not to classify a sentence as awkward was would I as a newspaper editor change the sentence before publishing it. This eliminated the tendency to call preferential changes errors.

Most sentences classified as awkward did not require the reader to puzzle out the meaning although some called for a mental rephrasing before continuing to the next sentence. For example, "seal pups were not dead when bashed" required the translation "pups were not killed instantly by being bashed." Other examples included:

> The reasons any NASL franchises are not able to survive are (14)
>
> Going through with the pregnancy could be a dangerous situation (16)
>
> abortions of unwanted children (16)
>
> This is the time it's too late (20)
>
> Sometimes the child will never be able to tell anyone (PN)
>
> Tin should be recycled also paper glass etc. (POL)
>
> His son the Dauphin was who would later be Louis XII. (6)
>
> After one year of being convicted (7)
>
> Occasionally required are sandblasters (2).

2. Parallel Grammatical Structure. Faulty parallel structure generally results in some awkwardness but does not influence the meaning of the sentence. Thirty-three errors were made by 21 students, or about one student in three. Two students committed three such errors each and eight committed two, suggesting that these students misunderstood parallel structure. The teacher marked three of these.

Eighteen of the errors involved three or more items in a series. Typical examples included:

> Parents who are under financial pressure, alcohol, Drugs, job pressure also abuse (6)
>
> Why bring a child into a world of unemployment, crime, the threat of wars, starvation, and most of all the thought that they were an unwanted

child (16)

He or she should know about sex, methods of birth control available and about the diseases (20)

They become too stubborn, too greedy, and won't settle down (POM)

If they have no friends, no prospects for the future and scared of the future (21).

The remainder of the errors involved words, phrases, or clauses, the majority being verbs:

Some having more...some have less (PH)

you can get along with each other and don't argue so much (PL)

18,000 tubes, which make a lot of heat and therefore developed frequent faults (10)

They begin to wear a different style of clothing and a lifestyle greatly modified from their homelife (25)

Traps that kill instantly would be more humane than the long suffering wait till death 18.

These five errors show the diversity of problems subsumed under the classification "parallel structure." Although some of the above errors can be readily corrected, each appears to require knowledge of a different grammatical principle.

3. Logic. Nine errors in the sample were classified as lapses in logic. Only one student made more than one such error in his paper and this student violated the same principle in both sentences. The teacher marked two of the nine logical errors. As the following examples show, students made a variety of errors in logic:

The United States had a snowfall (22)

[discussing a bridge] It's construction would be enjoyed by all (POK)

So our $10.00 is paying off the price while the new arrivals and future grades will likely no longer have to pay a sports fee (15)

Constructive graffitti is not having the grad year name along with principals and teachers names scrawled all over the country (2)

It (Communism) is one man saying (POH).

4. Comparisons. Twelve students each made one error in sentences comparing two or more objects or ideas. As can be seen below, the majority of these errors can be traced to oral usage which does not always require the second part of the comparison:

our ideas and not our parents (PN)

we should be trusted a little more (4)

mental punishment instead if physical (11)

travel along the trapline and decide whether or not they would like to change places (18).

5. Dangling Modifiers and Indefinite Reference. Although handbooks devote a good deal of space to discussion of dangling modifiers and indefinite reference, two students created only one error in each:

By taking a look at the world today, war is (POM)

In the Charter of the U.N., which contains the rules, it states (POO).

The teacher did not mark either.

6. Garbles. Garbled sentences are either grammatically or sematically incomplete. The sample contained 19 such errors written by 12 students. The two most prolific writers of garbles wrote four each while remainder wrote only one. The teacher marked

four.

One quarter of the garbles were long sentences in which the student appeared to become lost in the syntax:

> School sports is something that a student would look to show the coach or opposing teams just exactly what an athlete is made of (15).

A small number of the garbles, however, were compound sentences or clauses which did not make sense together:

> All of their activities are put off or either makes it difficult (23)
> District heroes as well as that of the wrestling team (17).

Most, however, appeared to be the product of confused thinking:

> The adopted parents are kids that are hurt because they were given away (6)
> I believe that with help from a local or even anywhere that will make these children feel at home would do a great deal (29).

B. Miscellaneous.

Sixty-seven of the errors in the sample were not readily classifiable into any of the above categories. Noun plurals accounted for 34 of these errors and conjunctions a further eight, but the remainder were generally single instances. The teacher marked five.

Some of the errors with noun plurals appeared to be the result of carelessness (*more student would*, PL) and some spoken idioms (*bring hard feeling*, 19). Most, however, appeared simply to make random words plural:

> people abuse their child (8)
> get the garbage at our house (POL)

They are entitled to their opinion (PK).

Five errors resulted from excess plurals, only one of which seemed to be due to carelessness:

The accidents [singular sense] were due (PK)

I'm their parents (20)

time and energies (POE).

Four of the errors with conjunctions resulted from omitting *and* from such constructions as *now [and] for the next ten years* (15). One student began a paragraph with *But*, one with *or else*, one substituted *while* for *but*, and one used only half of a correlative conjunction: *They not only feel that they are doing the right thing* (8). Most of these appear to be careless errors.

Inappropriate use of the passive voice resulted in two errors (*a lot of time was wasted by me*, POE), a mixed metaphor in one error (*pay a big piece of the pie*, POA), and using *one* to refer to a group (*one can find* meaning *the U.N. can find*) in one error. Other errors included missing signs ($), inappropriate use of parentheses, and a superfluous "the."

C. Letter Format

The assignment for the papers used in this study was to write a letter to the editor. Consequently, it was expected that the letters would be in standard format. Not one of the 60 papers included all of the elements of the formal business letter: heading, inside address, salutation, and complimentary close. Only one letter included a heading which included a return address and date, but even this was punctuated inconsistently, and it erroneously included the writer's name. Nine of the papers had neither a salutation or a close, 11 had a salutation but not a close, 12 were signed by the writer, 14 were signed with a moniker, and four had a close but not a salutation.

Of the 46 papers which contained a salutation, only 13 were punctuated correctly with a colon. Sixteen others used a comma (acceptable in a friendly letter but not a formal letter), three used a semicolon, three used a period, and 11 used no punctuation (acceptable in completely open punctuation). Most students observed the convention of capitalizing the first letter of only the first and last word in the salutation. Three did not (DEAR SIR/To the editor/Dear sir). Only two of the other 46, however, dealt with the subtleties of the rule: To whom this letter may Concern/To the Editor. The others were merely two-word salutations. Three students incorrectly indented the salutation five spaces.

Eight different salutations were used: Dear Editor/Dear Sir/To the Editor/Dearest Editor/*Dear Sir*/Dear Sir//Madam/and To whom this letter may concern. The last four appear to be inappropriate, but they accounted for only four of the 46 salutations. When variations in punctuation, capitialization, and word choice are considered, the sample contained 17 different salutations. Two salutations were used most frequently [Dear Editor, (7) and Dear Editor (7)]; most of the other 15 salutations were used by only one or two students.

Complementary closes were used less frequently than salutations, but in almost as great variety. Only 27 of the 60 students attempted a complementary close. Of these, 12 used a conventional close (nine used Sincerely yours and three Yours truly) and 15 personal variations (*From, By, Signed*). An additional 13 simply signed the letters making a total of 40 who made some attempt at closing the letter. By convention, when closed or mixed punctuation is used, a comma is required following the close. Seven of the 27 students used closes, punctuating them with four different marks: four used a comma, one used a period, one a dash, and one a colon. Seventeen used no punctuation at all. Ten of the 17 who failed to punctuate the close did punctuate the salutation which is not acceptable using open, closed, or mixed punctuation. Seven punctuated neither which

is acceptable when using open punctuation.

No student followed the textbook convention of using both a standard salutation followed by a colon and a standard close followed by a comma. Two of the 12 closes contained spelling errors *truly* and *your*. Only the first letter of the first word of a complementary close should be capitalized. Five of the twelve students who wrote conventional closes capitalized only the first words. One did not capitalize either. Seven of the eight one-word closes were capitalized and seven of the nine unconventional closes followed the textbook rule on capitalization.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

1. SUMMARY

The 60 students in the study made 3870 errors in usage. Of these, 1284 (33 percent) were punctuation errors, 483 (12.5 percent) were errors in agreement, 466 (12 percent) were sentence errors, 1362 (35 percent) were diction errors, and 275 (7 percent) were miscellaneous. The teacher marked 492 of these errors, or about 12 percent. He marked a higher percentage of diction errors (21 percent) and sentence errors (13 percent) than other types of errors. He marked only six percent of the punctuation errors.

A. Punctuation Errors

Errors with commas accounted for over one-third of the punctuation errors and capital letters and apostrophes accounted for another one-third. Errors with periods, question marks, colons, parentheses, numbers, hyphens, signs, and quotation marks accounted for the other punctuation errors.

1. Comma. The results of the analysis of the use of the comma with subordinate elements suggest that these students generally do not use the comma with these constructions successfully. Students made a high percentage of errors by omitting required commas. These, of course, focussed the readers's attention on the text rather than the meaning. A more important feature, however, was that they used optional commas sparingly. In many cases this detracted from the potential of their papers.

That many papers contained incorrect and correct uses or options used and not used in adjacent sentences suggests that students have neither a conscious knowledge nor an internalized knowledge of the conventions of written English. They can use commas correctly--they have not simply salted the papers with random commas--but the rules are not ingrained deeply enough so that students can use them automatically. Nor are they conscious enough of the rules to use them effectively as aids to proofreading.

Nor were students generally familiar with such conventions as the punctuation of dates, geographical areas, or quotations. Two students began lines with commas (one did this twice) rather than placing them at the ends of lines. Many of the common errors--separating subjects and verbs with commas, placing commas immediately after conjunctions and relative pronouns, and using commas in place of other punctuation marks--are potentially confusing for the reader.

2. Capital Letters. Although students used internal capitals correctly more than twice as often as they used them incorrectly (537 correct to 200 incorrect), most of the correct uses showed understanding of only the most rudimentary rules. Furthermore, although four of the papers accounted for over half the excess capital letters, only seven of the 60 papers were free from errors in capitalization. Four of the correct papers required no internal capitalization. Almost half of the errors of omission and almost all of the excess capitals were violations of rudimentary principles. In a small number of

cases, correct and incorrect uses appeared side-by-side in the same sentence or paragraph. Only five percent of the errors were marked by the teacher, all but one rudimentary and obvious.

3. Apostrophe. Students used the possessive apostrophe incorrectly more often than they used it correctly (140 to 117). They failed to distinguish correctly between the pronoun *its* and the contraction *it's* 37 times, and failed to use other contractions correctly 25 times, 15 of these incorrectly placing the apostrophe (did'nt). Most errors with the possesssive apostrophe could have been corrected by the application of the two simple apostrophe rules. No examples were found which required application of subtle parts of the apostrophe rules. Students also inserted 36 superfluous apostrophes in simple plurals and third-person-singular verbs. Frequently, students used the apostrophe correctly and incorrectly in similar constructions in the same paper, sometimes in the same paragraph. The teacher marked 21 of these errors, including examples of most types.

4. Periods and Abbreviations. Almost half of the errors (22 of 49) involving periods were careless errors (e.g., *P.T.A* or omitting a period at the end of a sentence). Fifteen other errors with standard abbreviations (e.g., Mr or Oct) might have been the result of either carelessness or lack of knowledge. The three students who used abbreviations correctly and incorrectly in the same paper suggest carelessness as the cause. On the other hand, the nine errors using double punctuation at the ends of sentences (?.) or following abbreviations (G.V.R.D..) show a lack of knowledge of these conventions. Students used optional periods in acronyms only one time in thirteen and were often inconsistent, using and omitting periods side by side (*U.F.F.A.* and *NASL* in the same sentence). One student placed periods in DNA in a hypercorrection. Only two students appeared aware of the convention of writing out the abbreviated names in full in parentheses the first time an abbreviation is used, and only one did this correctly. The teacher marked five of these errors.

5. Questions and Exclamation Marks.

Most of the errors in the use of question marks appeared to be the result of carelessness: 26 of the 31 incorrect omissions occurred in papers in which at least one other question mark was used correctly. The sample contained 10 question marks used in constructions which were not questions, all 10 errors made by three students who appeared not to understand the convention. Only one student used one exclamation mark incorrectly. The teacher marked three of the 41 incorrect question marks, but did not mark the exclamation mark.

3. Colons and Semicolons. Students did not appear to understand the conventions of using colons and semicolons. The did not use any optional colons or semicolons and they omitted more of the required marks than they placed correctly. They used only three of the 11 colons required to introduce quotations or lists (one student used a colon correctly, but omitted a required colon on the same page in almost indentical constructions) and placed three colons incorrectly. (e.g., following a copula verb and a conjunctive adverb). Students misused or incorrectly used semicolons twice as often as they used them correctly. Only one student correctly used a semicolon before a conjunctive adverb which joined two independent clauses, but this same student used a semicolon incorrectly before a conjunctive adverb which interrupted a single clause, indicating that he had a feeling about conjunctive adverbs, but did not understand the convention. Students used semicolons correctly in long compound sentences or to separate items in a series four of seven possible times. The five semicolons which were used incorrectly appeared to be random errors. The teacher marked two colons (both of these the omission of a colon to introduce a list) and one semicolon.

7. Parenthesis and Dashes. Students misused parenthesis and dashes more often (25 times) than they used them correctly (17 times), but a number of the errors were

minor and required both knowledge of a number of rules and fairly sophisticated judgment to correct. Fifteen of the 25 errors involved setting off parenthetical expressions, seven of these making the sentences very awkward to read. Four additional errors involved typographical conventions. Three students both used parentheses correctly and omitted them incorrectly in the same sentence. At least eight rules and informed judgment would be required to correct these 25 errors. The teacher marked only one of these errors.

8. Numbers. Although students used numerals correctly (176 times) more often they used them incorrectly (69 times), fewer than half of the papers which used numerals (20 of 47) were error free. Of these, only eight used a great enough variety to suggest that the author understood the conventions of writing numbers. Eleven papers contained one to two errors while five more contained three or more. One student accounted for 11 of the 69 errors. Eleven of the papers contained both correct and incorrect examples of the same convention, suggesting that the author was not being governed by rules. Most of the errors (60 of 69) involved using figures rather than writing numbers in words, and in optional uses, students chose figures rather than writing numbers in words by a wide margin (33 of 38). Although almost two-thirds of the numerals should have been written out, student papers in general would not have been improved perceptibly by the application of such simple axiom's as "when in doubt, write it out." To improve their papers, students needed a clear understanding of the rules for using figures and of the applications of these rules. The teacher did not mark any of the errors, but he inserted an optional comma in one number.

9. Hyphens. Students used hyphens poorly and inconsistently with most errors being errors of omission. They used hyphens correctly only 33 of the 166 opportunities. Six students accounted for 44 of the 133 errors with the other 89 errors distributed among 39 papers. Compound adjectives required 113 hyphens, but students placed only

27 of them correctly. Nor did they use other hyphenation conventions correctly: dividing words at the ends of lines (6 of 10 wrong), fractions (3 of 3 wrong), numbers (2 of 6 wrong). They also used six of seven prefixes (*non, extra, anti, self*) incorrectly and made three errors not covered by any textbook rule. Eleven of the 45 papers which used or required hyphens contained both correct and incorrect uses suggesting that even those who used hyphens correctly did not thoroughly understand the conventions. The teacher did not mark any examples of this error.

10. Signs. Signs are shunned by some handbooks and tacitly approved by others. Students in the study perferred the percent and dollar signs to writing the words out by a ratio of three to one (39 signs; 13 written out). Students avoided the obvious errors using the percent and dollar signs (using signs with written-out numerals or using signs alone), but made a small number of errors using the dollar sign with large, round numbers. They did, however, erroneously use the ampersand and the plus sign in place of *and* five times. Nor were individual students always consistent in their use of signs: one used $10.00 and ten dollars in the same paragraph; a second used sixteen percent, 16 percent, and 27%; and a third used $1.65 and fifty-seven cents in the same sentence.

However, although students did not misuse large numbers of signs, their papers showed mastery of only the most rudimentary conventions. The teacher did not mark any of these errors.

11. Quotation Marks and Italics. Students made 59 errors with quotation marks and used them correctly 34 times. They made errors with italics three times. Most of the correct uses were with basic, simple conventions: quoting the direct words of a speaker, defining words and phrases, and emphasizing words. However, not even these conventions were used correctly all of the time. Students placed cliches and colloquialisms

in quotation marks more than half of the time, but in most cases, eliminating the cliche would have been preferable. However, more than half the errors with quotation marks involved setting off common words used in common contexts with no apparent reason. The teacher marked five of the 62 errors with quotation marks and italics.

12. Miscellaneous. Seven of the eight miscellaneous errors involved misuse of conventions: 11/9/80; 79'. The teacher marked one error.

B. Agreement

Twelve percent (483) of the errors in the sample were errors with subject-verb agreement or pronoun agreement. The teacher marked 38 of these, just under eight percent.

1. Subject-verb Agreement. Students made 76 errors in subject-verb agreement, seven of which were marked by the teacher. Almost one-half of the errors were with singular subjects, one-third of these apparently simple slips. Adjectival clauses or prepositional phrases separating the subject and verb were associated with 15 of the 76 errors and collective nouns an additional three. The teacher marked five of the eleven errors with expletives, as high a percentage as any in the study. The subjunctive mode, on the other hand, was not marked by the teacher. Only five students used the subjunctive correctly while 17 students made 31 errors.

2. Pronoun Agreement (Number). Seven students accounted for 40 percent of the errors in pronoun agreement in number. The fact that many students used this construction both correctly and incorrectly in the same paper and the hypercorrect forms (kids...him or her) suggest that students are not aware of the agreement rules. Almost all of the errors consisted of a singular noun and a plural pronoun (a person...they). The teacher marked ten of these errors, mostly of the "son or daughter...they" or "Austria...they" variety.

3. Pronoun Case. Students seldom used the sophisticated pronoun structures outlined in handbooks. They made three errors with pronoun case following a verb, each of which violated a complex handbook rule. They made 12 errors using *who/whom* which would require mastery of five different rules to correct. The teacher marked only one example, an intensifier which might be considered correct (or perhaps doubtful).

4. The Relative Pronoun *That*. Students made 75 errors using the relative pronoun *that*. Two-thirds of these involved substituting *that* for *who* or *which (child that is screaming*. 8). The remaining 25 errors required six different rules to explain. The teacher marked only one mususe of *that (It was Kershaw that recommended*...19).

5. Pronoun Reference and Shifts. Thirty-eight of the 60 students made at least one error in pronoun reference. The papers contained 105 errors in pronoun reference of which the teacher marked 20. Ninety-eight of the reference errors involved *they, it* and *this* without an antecedent. The other nine errors involved such constructions as "There was a report." Since the constsruction is very common in oral English, students may find it difficult to avoid.

More than one-half of the papers (34) contained shifts in pronoun reference. Thirty-two of the 98 errors involved *you* or *your* in place of *one* or *one's* and a further 31 involved the intrusion of the first person into objective description. The remaining 35 errors required five rules to explain. The teacher did not mark any of these errors.

C. Sentence Errors

The sample contained 125 comma faults, 62 run-on sentences, and 70 sentence fragments, of which the teacher marked 12, 11, and 15 respectively. The teacher did not mark a given type of sentence error consistently throughout the sample or even in a given paper. Rather, he appeared to sample, marking all types but few examples. In

addition, he marked two complete sentences as comma faults and one as a fragment. Other errors in this category included errors in verb tense (75), split infinitives (4), faulty co-ordination (94), and misplaced modifiers (36). The teacher marked 21 of these errors.

1. Comma Faults. Over half of the papers contained at least one comma fault. One paper contained 23 or 18 percent of those in the sample. Students appeared to be inconsistent in punctuating sentences, punctuating one pair of sentences as a comma fault and the next pair using similar structures as two sentences. The length of clauses appeared to influence the production of comma faults: 90 percent had at least one clause of eight or fewer words. In addition, the part of speech opening the second clause was a significant factor (41 of the 125 were opened by pronouns, 11 by expletives, and 9 by demonstratives), suggesting that students gave these words conjunctive force. Conjunctive adverbs, discussed in detail in handbooks, accounted for only seven comma faults. Interrogative pronouns opened the second clause in nine comma faults.

2. Run-on Sentences. Almost one-half of the papers contained one or more run-on sentences, the largest number in a single paper being 16. The run-on sentences ranged between 16 and 91 words so length did not seem to be a significant determinent. The teacher marked 18 percent of the run-ons, but did not concentrate on run-ons of any particular length.

3. Sentence Fragments. Twenty-eight of the compositions contained one or more sentence fragments. Eighteen of these also contained a comma fault or a run-on, suggesting that about one-third of the students in the sample had difficulty constructing or recognizing complete sentences. Length was not a significant factor with fragments ranging between three and 44 words. Forty-two of the fragments could have been corrected by altering punctuation suggesting that the students had an oral sentence sense

but did not know the rules of editorial usage. However, the students would be required to master several rules and identify a variety of structures to correct all of the errors. Twenty-eight of the fragments were non-attachable and demonstrated more serious difficulties. Some of these were short, rhetorical fillers but many were multi-clausal, offering the student the illusion of a full sentence.

The teacher marked both the attachable and non-attachable fragments. He did not mark any of the fragments which were over 20 words in length and generally marked only the obvious fragments, those which interfered most with the sense of the passage.

4. Verbs. Students made 75 errors in verb tenses, 11 of which the teacher marked. A small number of these errors which involved the simple past tense were the result of carelessness or were classified as substandard. Two-thirds of the errors involved modal auxiliaries (32) or perfect or progressive tenses (21). Many of these structures are not used well in oral conversation. Since a complex set of rules is required to explain these errors, they will not easily be corrected.

5. Split Infinitives. Students made only four errors with split infinitives, none of which impaired the meaning, none of which the teacher marked.

6. Co-ordination. One-half of the students made at least one error in co-ordination or subordination. The largest number of these errors (73 of 94) involved the co-ordination of two clauses, one of which was subordinate to the other. This error is very frequent in oral communication and therefore difficult for students to recognize when proofreading. Excessive co-ordination is a mark of immaturity. The teacher marked five of the 17 errors in excessive co-ordination but only four of the other 77 errors, indicating the obviousness of the error of excessive co-ordination. Upside-down subordination, discussed in detail in handbooks, was not a problem for these students.

Only four of the errors were with faulty subordination.

7. Misplaced Modifiers. Two-thirds of the 36 errors with misplaced modifiers involved the adverb only. Although handbooks discuss these errors, they are very common in oral English and do not usually appear to impair meaning. Consequently, students probably do not see this construction as an error. The teacher marked just one example.

D. DICTION

The 1362 errors in diction in the sample included 543 spelling errors, 566 lexical errors, and 253 structural errors. The teacher marked 33 percent of the spelling errors, 16 percent of the lexical errors and 7 percent of the structural errors.

1. Spelling. The sample contained 543 spelling errors or one misspelling for each 58 words. The most accurate speller misspelled only one word in a 442-word paper while the least able speller made 56 errors in a 979-word paper. The nine worst spellers made an average of 23.8 errors each or 3.4 errors per hundred words.

The spelling errors were very diverse and suggested a wide variety of root causes. Only 10 percent of the misspellings could have been corrected by application of the four most common spelling rules. In most cases, however, the simple rule rather than the complex exception was required. An additional 15 percent of the errors were with compound words. It is difficult to apply logic to these words to determine whether they should be written as separate words, hyphenated words, or solids. Homophones accounted for another seven percent of the errors. Again, it is difficult to determine the spelling of these words logically.

The addition, omission, or substitution of letters accounted for over 50 percent of the spelling errors. While a number of these errors might be attributed to carelessness on the part of the writer, the majority seem to be the result of mispronunciations and the misunderstanding of vowel sounds. Proper nouns, suffixes, and prefixes were responsible for an additional 10 percent of the errors.

There does not appear to be a particular pattern to the spelling errors in this sample which would lead to a suggested sequence for remediation. Since students obviously cannot look in a dictionary for every word they write, they must learn to select words with potential probelms. The findings of this study can offer no help in that regard. Nor did the teacher appear to mark errors in any sequence. He marked 33 percent of the errors and placed a slightly greater emphasis (40 percent) in words which violated the spelling rules, but he did not mark one type of error to the exclusion of others.

2. Diction: Lexical. Just under one-half of the errors in this category were colloquialisms (255) and a further 17 percent were words missing (94). Most of the former were intrusions of the informal oral language which did not seriously impair the meaning of the passage. Many of the latter did impair the meaning and appeared to be the result of carelessness and poor proofreading. The teacher marked only 1.6 percent of the colloquialisms but 40.4 percent of the words missing. His marking of colloquialisms is inconsistent with his marking of many of the other lexical items of which he marked considerably higher percentages: lexical substitution (24.5 percent), standard usage (31.4 percent), and extra words (26.7 percent).

Most of the lexical substitutions and malapropisms appeared to result from misunderstandings of word definitions, but gobbledygook, lapses in standard usage and fractured idioms appeared to be rooted in the students' oral vocabularies. Only the

category of extra words and opposites and the category of omissions appeared to be the result of carelessness. No patterns emerged to suggest strategies for correcting these shortcomings which would be helpful to most students.

3. Diction: Structural. Similar to the lexical errors above, many of the structural problems with diction found in the students' papers would tend to irritate the reader rather than confuse him. The structural problems do, however, tend to be more serious and more irritating than the lexical errors. The 51 grammatical substitutions involved incorrect forms of pronouns, using adjectives in place of adverbs, and unconventional usage. Most of the 108 preposition errors involved substituting a closely related preposition for the correct one and did not interfere with the meaning of the sentence. Most errors would probably be unnoticed in casual conversation although a small number were potentially confusing. Ten of the 14 errors students made with past-participle endings (e.g., use to) are also in common use. The other errors included adjectival complements, redundancies, misuse of of reflexives, misuse of like as a conjunction, and the substitution of conjunctions for infinitives. Most of the errors are very common in oral English and therefore difficult to correct. Furthermore, with the exception of choice of prepositions (which appears to be largely illogical and inexplicable in English), the errors in this section require a very complex set of rules to explain. A limited number of rules could be expected to correct only a limited number of the errors. The teacher marked only 7.5 percent of the errors in this category. Over half of these involved grammatical substitutions. He marked only two of the 108 errors with prepositions.

E. Miscellaneous.

The errors classified as miscellaneous included 132 syntax errors; 67 errors with noun plurals, conjunctions, the passive voice, and others; and 76 errors with letter format. The teacher marked 17 of the syntax errors, five of the errors with noun

plurals, but none of the errors in letter format.

1. Syntax. Almost half of the 132 errors in syntax were classified as awkward. These errors required some mental rephrasing by the reader, but generally did not impair the meaning of the passage. These errors represented a wide variety of syntactical problems. The errors in parallel structure were similarly diverse: each error appeared to require application of a separate rule. Garbles are by definition ungrammatical. While students might be able to recognize and correct those which are slips of the pencil, discussion with the teacher rather than application of rules would be required to correct most garbles.

2. Miscellaneous. Thirty-four of the 67 miscellaneous errors were errors with noun plurals and a further eight with conjunctions. The others related to a variety of problems inclulding the passive voice, mixed metaphors, and omitted signs. Some of the errors with noun plurals appeared to be the result of carelessness, but most appeared to be the result of confusion about when to make nouns plural in such constructions as *people abuse their child.*

3. Letter Format. Not one of the 60 letters to the editor included all of the elements of a business letter. Forty-six of the papers contained some parts of a business letter, but all of these contained at least one error in format. The omitted parts of the letters were not counted as errors. However, in the bits and pieces that the students did include they made 76 errors. Application of a limited number of letter-writing rules would have improved these letters considerably. The teacher did not mark any of the errors or omissions.

2. CONCLUSIONS

The study found no evidence to support the hypothesis that a manageable number of rules of editorial usage could be used to significantly improve the writing of these grade-twelve students. While individual papers could have been improved by the application of a particlular subset of rules, no one set of rules would have applied to all students. The observation (above) on fragments is typical of the results of the analysis of errors.

> The number of different kinds of fragments discovered suggest that common lessons and exercises on sentence fragments might not be fruitful. Only on rare occasions (using subordinating conjunctions or semicolons, for example) did more than two or three students share a grammatical construction in an error. Individual students, however, often repeated the same kind of error two or more times in a paper. Nine students, half of those whose papers contained more than one error, repeated the same structural error at least once in their papers with one student using the same structure four times.

The large number of errors found in the study--3870 in the 31,702 word sample or more than 12 errors per hundred words--was not unexpected. Other careful studies have found similiar numbers. What was unexpected was the large variety of errors. This variety suggests that no two students would benefit from the same instuction for all but a very minor part of their work with editorial usage.

The findings on what the teacher marked were also somewhat surprising inasmuch as the teacher included a thorough review of editorial usage as part of his grade-twelve English program. Far form paying lip-service to usage, he taught it as part of multiactivitied classes over a period of three months, worked through exercises with the students, and tested them on usage to make certain they had learned it.

The teacher marked over 12 percent of the errors in the sample which, when the sheer number of errors is considered, suggests that he is a conscientious marker. What was suprising, however, was the apparent randomness of his marking. He did not appear to concentrate on one type of error--even for a given student, for the most part--which would suggest that he was not attempting to give more important errors higher priority. Instead, he generally pointed out a variety of different problems in each paper, marking only one or two examples of each error. Athough such marking may give students an indication of the breadth of their problems with writing, it does not give them a manageable program of improvement on which to work.

3. IMPLICATIONS

A. A sequential program. Although these students studied English through twelve years of schooling, there is no indication that they received sequential instruction on a manageable number of concepts each year. In fact, if the handbooks and textbooks are followed, students receive a somewhat superficial tour of the entire catalog of English usage each year. This is somewhat analogous to teaching the whole of mathematics each year in the hope that all the basics will be covered.

Clearly, if there is to be manageable sequence to teaching editorial usage, teachers need to know when students are best prepared to learn given concepts and how much can be mastered each year. If no such hierarchical sequence is discovered, an arbitrary sequence which concentrates on a limited number of concepts to be mastered each year could be designed. In any case, the profession needs a scope and sequence chart of editorial usage so that students can master a manageable amount of material each year and review appropriately. In addition, of course, the traditional methods of teaching students editorial usage (the teacher explains the concept and the students do exercises) may require revision. The number and diversity of errors found in the current

sample suggest that the entire catalog cannot be learned in one year at least by using current methods.

B. Oral Usage. A large number of the errors found in this study--both lexical and structural problems--appear to be based on oral usage. It may be that these errors require instruction through the ear before they can be eliminated by the eye or hand. The difficulties students faced with auxiliaries and *who* and *whom* which are not used well in oral English and the number of misspellings which appeared to be the result of mispronunciations suggest that an oral approach may be required.

C. Awareness. c. The high proportion of careless errors found in this study suggest that students need to be trained to be careful proofreaders. Obviously, most students do not make deliberate errors in their writing and most errors are not solely the product of sloth. The challenge is, then, to devise ways to make them consciuous of language and its effects. Reading and discussion of both literature and the work of peers from the point of view of their structure may provide a beginnning.

D. Content. Unlike the students in Shaughnessy's (1977) study, these students did not appear to be crippled by the fear of error. In fact, their willingness to share their ideas with a public and the strength of their convictions was the most refreshing part of the study.

It was surprising, however, that no relationship was found between the author's commitment to the topic and the number of errors in usage. It might be hypothesized that a student with a deep personal interest in a topic would wish to present his or her ideas in the best possible form. However, in this study, the most impelled writing (paper PN in which a student explored her response to her parents' divorce) contained the most errors. Nor did there appear to be any correlation between interest in a topic and reduced errors in usage in the other papers in the study. Interest in the topic and

pride of workmanship seemed unrelated. This may suggest that topics requiring a deep personal involvement on the part of the writer may not be appropriate for publication or accurate reflections of the writers' skill with editorial usage. While these papers have clear benefits for the authors when they are being written, proofreading and editing may require the author to be at a greater distance from the work than the topic will allow.

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640 wds

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CHECKLIST: EDITORIAL ENGLISH PAPER NO. N PRE/(POST)

GREEN: TEACHER MARKED; RED: PEER MARKED

Commas	Used cor	Used incor	Not Used cor	Not Used incor	Optional used	Optional no
Series before 'and'						///
Sub Cl: Initial						
Final			///			
Free Mod	//			/		
Adverb: Intro						
Interrupt	/					
Final	/	/		/		
Compound St					/	
Phrase (Subj)			////			
(Pred)			/			
Words (subj)			////			
Words (pred)			///			
But	/			//		
Res Apositives		/				
Quotations						
Other Non Res Ap	//					
Other						

Semicolon						
Comp Sent						
Conjunct Adv						
Items in Series						
Colon						

Apostrophe	cor	incor	Omit	Excess
Poss (No 's') Canada's			survivors'	
Poss ('s')			Hitlers / publics	law's treatie's citizen's
Contraction				
Its				
It's		It's³ (poss)		
Capitals Jews, Pole, Slovacks Third Rich Hitlers Canada /// Nazis /// Holo caused /// Nazi like Criminals /// Germans /// War Criminals /// Homosexuals ✓ The final solution /// International laws Canadian government Neo-Nazis Solicitor General of Canada SS Gestapo				Homosexuals

S-V Agr	cor	incor
Comp Subj		
Sing Subj (list) ~~RCMP have~~		RCMP have
Subjunctive		

Pro Agr		
1. Anteced (Number) Criminals ... him ⟵ ⟹ Criminal ... he ... him ... he ...		
2. Case Nom		
Objective		
Possessive		
3. Misuse 'that'		
4. Who ~~people who~~ /// whole Nazis fell over ✓		~~who the Nazis~~
Whom		
sub 'which'		
5. Ambig It/They		
Emphasis: Quotes		~~Capitol~~

Sh. Pls Pronoun Person Would you? / (Can anyone / Some one else) / Send Letters.

Use of Figures 43 years ago / 6,000,000 / 40 years ago

Abreviations: RCMP (no ') / SS / W.C. (war criminal / govt.

Post is.

There are ✓✓
it is time

Italics

X/XX undesireables (corrected / preserved in quotes)

ERRORS
(below) 1,11. Change Tense] Between sentences - Are → were
- were - are
2. Fragments
3. Comma Fault ||| /
4. Run on
5. Faulty Co-ord ///
6. Excessive Coord
7. Faulty Subord
8. Wrong Conj
9. Spelling
10. Split Infin
11. Misplaced Mod is only placing
12. Prepositions ~~xxxxxx~~

describing
approxamately
Stillct (still ct)
riegn
occurance
Europeans
livelyhoods

Repeats

Too

cannot ✓

DICTION
1. Wd Missing
2. Colloq. wrong to be righted (below)
3. Wrong Word prosecution for persecution [T?] / "never" for "not" /
4. Misuse reflexive "continuous" for "continually"
5. Redundant ["have spoken" for "spoke"]
above ②
6. 'Like' Conj
7. Signs "+"
8. 'ing' missing
9. hyphenation present-day undescribable
10. quotes missing
11. Extra words
12. other diction
X Substandard: Nazis seeked out

OTHER
Non parallel structure
describing ... and to be able [editor?]
were dehumanized and submitted to
destroyed many generations and numerious included
Plural: 6,000,000 human being
Question XX Question mark comma X
✓ Substandard: government has not put to use its to policing powers to find
✓ : laws... stating the prosecution and return of War criminals to
other states (XX
Begin paragraph with "but"
Begin line with comma. XX
X "Only" in place of "but"
Quotation - Used ...","...
1 (above) [T] greed country (editor)
Form citizen groups [T] citizens [sic] groups

Dear Sir/Madam
Thank you
signed.

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